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CHRISTIAN MESSAGE  
GEORGE A. BARTON

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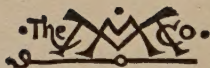
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**THE HEART  
OF THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE**



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# THE HEART OF THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

BY

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PROFESSOR

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TO  
THE MEMORY OF  
**James E. Rhoads**  
FIRST PRESIDENT OF BRYN MAWR COLLEGE  
WHO BY VOICE AND LIFE  
WAS A POWERFUL EXPONENT OF  
THE  
CHRISTIAN MESSAGE



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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE lack of symmetry which the first edition exhibited has been corrected by the insertion of a chapter on "the Christian Message according to the Reformers." Slight changes and improvements have also been made throughout the volume, though in all essential features it remains unchanged.

G. A. B.





## PREFACE

THE following pages were prepared as a course of Lectures for the Friends' Summer School at Sagamore, Massachusetts, where they were delivered in 1908. They have since appeared as a series of articles in the *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*. It is hoped that in this more permanent form they may render some helpful service.

The form and the limits were imposed upon the material by the demands of the occasion. No exhaustive treatment could be given in so brief a compass. All that could be hoped was that the Lectures should suggestively indicate the heart of the Christian Message and the tendencies of Christian history. They were written to help busy men and women who had no access to the extensive literature upon these subjects. It is hoped that they may still render such service. The writer, a specialist in another field, has for years found an inspiring avocation in the field treated below. He is aware that on many of these subjects there are wide differences of opinion, but it is not upon such differences

that the emphasis should be laid. One should rather strive to find the heart of the Christian Message under all its varying forms. That has been the writer's effort; whether he has succeeded, the reader must judge.

That in so brief a compass a chapter is given to the Quakers is due to the fact that the Lectures were written for a Friends' School. It is believed, however, that the general reader will find that the Quaker movement illustrates the fundamental elements of the Christian Message as well as any other epoch of the Reformation.

If these pages shall stimulate any one to more whole-hearted efforts for the establishment of the Kingdom of God, the writer's highest hopes will be realized.

GEORGE A. BARTON.

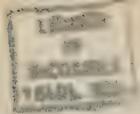
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## CHAPTER I

### THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST

IN the New Testament four clearly defined periods can be discerned, and in each of these periods the Christian message was presented in different ways. These periods are: (1) Christ's ministry: (2) the primitive Jewish Church: (3) the period of the Apostle Paul; and (4) the period of the Johannine writings. I do not mean to say that it is easy to pigeon-hole all the New Testament writings in these four compartments, for there are, of course, side currents and intermixture. The Apostle Paul, for example, started somewhere near the Jewish standpoint, differing from it mainly in his conception of the abrogation of the Jewish Law by the crucifixion of Christ, and in the Epistles, written during his Roman captivity, had reached a position approaching that of the Johannine writings. The Book of Acts, also, while belonging on the whole to the primitive Jewish type of thought, exhibits elements of kinship to Paul. Again, the

Synoptic Gospels contain the message of Christ, though they contain also elements which came from the Jewish education of their authors. But in spite of all these facts it is possible to distinguish clearly the four well-defined types of New Testament thought indicated above.

The first of these types, the Message of Christ, is the subject of this chapter. The third and fourth of them (the Pauline and Johannine conceptions of the message) will form the subjects of subsequent chapters. The second one (the primitive Jewish-Christian conception) is quite commonly mistaken for New Testament Christianity, and is, accordingly, already in good degree familiar.

In tracing the teaching of Jesus it is necessary to exercise some discernment. The Master's earliest message is embedded in the Synoptic Gospels, but those Gospels were written by disciples of Jewish training, who did not fully understand His message. It seems probable that much, if not all, of that teaching which these evangelists attribute to Christ concerning a cataclysmic ending of the age and a coming of Christ to a judgment which shall consign the wicked to flames, is transferred bodily from contemporaneous Jewish expectations such as

are expressed in their apocalypses, many of which are now known to us. This teaching is diametrically opposed to the teaching of Christ Himself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In books on the Life of Christ which are before the public today five different lines of approach are exhibited.

1. There is the old uncritical use of the sources, in which everything in the Gospels is harmonized, and the two natures of Christ, the human and Divine, are assumed to be distinct. Such writers as Farrar, Geikie, and Edersheim are exponents of this line of approach.

2. There is what may be called the critico-psychological line of approach, exhibited in such writers as Baldensperger and Oscar Holtzmann. This school accepts the results of the modern literary study of the Gospels, believes in the reality of the humanity of Christ, finds his Divine nature in the perfection of the human and in Jesus' own consciousness, believes that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, but in a different sense than that entertained by the Jews, and explains the presence of large portions of the eschatological material of the Gospels as importations into the account from current Jewish expectations. The members of this school agree that Christ was incarnated as a first century man, but differ as to the extent to which he shared current expectations. Shailer Mathews (*The Messianic Hope in the New Testament*) and Dobschüts (*Eschatology of the Gospels*) hold that he shared a considerable portion of the Jewish conceptions; F. E. Scott (*The Kingdom and the Messiah*) and C. W. Emmet (*The Eschatological Question in the Gospels*) grant the Master greater independence of them, though they go a considerable distance with the others; while B. W. Bacon (*Jesus, the Son of God*), holds that Jesus' conception of Himself as Messiah was a sort of prophetic elder Brother, whose function was to bring the people to a realization of the fatherhood of God, and that it lacked apocalyptic elements altogether.

3. There is the eschatological school of Johannes Weiss and Schweitzer, who hold Jesus responsible for all the

eschatological utterances of the Gospels in their most literal form. According to this school Jesus was wholly a child of his age. He expected when He rode into Jerusalem that the heavens would open and the cataclysm come, and, that it did not come, formed a part of the agony of Gethsemane! Schweitzer's book, entitled in its English edition, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, places these views within the reach of English readers.

4. There are writers like Nathaniel Schmidt, who deny that Jesus ever claimed to be the Messiah at all, and to whom Jesus is a mere man, though a twentieth century man, who had little intellectual connection with his age.

5. There is the mythological school composed of such writers as Jensen, Drews, and W. B. Smith, who declare that Jesus never lived; that the story of His life is but the revamping of old heathen myths.

Of these five methods of approach, the first and last are on scholarly grounds impossible. The first ignores the historical sifting of sources necessary to a scientific work, the last ignores historical evidence altogether. Its reasonings have been rightly pronounced "elaborate bosh." The third method fails to take into account the certainty that the early Gospel-traditions were to some degree colored by the media through which they passed, and wholly fails to account for the unique influence of Jesus. The fourth method is historically faulty in that it fails to account for the connection of a Messianic tradition with Jesus. It as completely cuts Him off from any historical connection with his age, as the third view buries Him under the conceptions of his contemporaries. The one method of approach that at once conserves the demands of historical scholarship and of religion is the second, though in the application of this there are yet many unsettled questions. One of these is the degree to which Jesus, as a first century Jew, could combine current Jewish Messianic expectations with those spiritual views of His which so completely transcended them. This is a point on which opinions will differ for some time to come. To the writer it seems clear that Jesus cannot be held responsible for that material which contradicts the spirit of His teaching. It is characteristic of a religious genius to transcend the



thought of his time. In his direct perception of what is consonant with the character of God, he leaps the centuries. This was true of Amos, of Paul, of St. Francis of Assisi, of George Fox. To believe less of Jesus is to think Him less than they.

In making our estimate of the Master's message, therefore, we shall omit that which has evidently been taken over from Judaism into the Gospels. This is not the place to give detailed reasons for so doing. Such discussion belongs to the threshing-machine of the study or the class-room; we wish reverently to approach the great granary, and, apart from the dust of the critical threshing-machine, to partake of the pure wheat itself.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus Christ brought to the world a new message. Of course it contained elements that had been prominent in previous systems—elements too that had been prominent in the teachings of the Old Testament prophets, and yet in its selection of these and the elimination of others, in its added spiritual grasp, its insight into the heart of God and man, and the unique whole which was thus produced, it was in an important sense new.

<sup>1</sup> It is enough to say that two, at least, of our first three Gospels were based on previously written documents. Most scholars hold that these documents were two in number. The writer agrees with Professor Burton in holding that there were four (see *Decennial Publications of the University of Chicago*, First Series, vol. v., pp. 195-264).

It was, however, related not only to the remote, but to the immediate past, and fitted to the needs of the moment when it was delivered. As a rare combination of eternal principles with the demands of the hour the message is also unique.

This message took shape in the mind of Jesus in a great experience, for He was so much one of us that He "grew in wisdom and stature," and underwent the psychological development of a normal mind. This great experience is worthy of our study, because it reveals to us how His message was related to the thought of His time, how it differed from it, and brings us face to face with some of the new elements of eternal value in it.

There is reason to believe that Jesus had always possessed an extraordinary consciousness of the Fatherhood of God. This consciousness had as one of its constituent elements a unique sense of moral oneness with the Father. His question, "Did ye not know that I must be in the things of My Father?" as well as the absence of any trace of a consciousness of sin in Him, are proofs of this. But the consciousness of a Messianic mission up to the time of His baptism was not, apparently, a part of His conception of Himself.

The Jews of the time were looking for a Messiah who should establish an earthly kingdom. We now know the character of the Messiah of their expectations from many different apocalypses. From these apocalypses we learn that, though the conceptions were not uniform, there was a growing tendency to regard the Messiah as a heavenly being, who had enjoyed a long pre-existence with God. Those who did not hold this view, and who believed the Messiah would be born on the earth, thought that He would be caught up to God to await the proper time of His manifestation. Both classes agreed that He would be revealed from heaven at the proper moment, that He would place Himself at the head of Israel's armies, and with supernatural power overcome her enemies, and make the Jews the masters of the world.

The Pharisaic circle of sympathisers in Galilee, to which Joseph and Mary belonged, must have been familiar with many of these phases of the Messianic hope of the times. They were a part of the theological atmosphere in which He was reared, and He was no doubt familiar with many of the highly supernatural features of these expectations. And yet His human life was so natural, and His con-

sciousness of union with the Father so spiritual, that it apparently never occurred to Him during His early years to think of Himself as the expected Messiah.

This was the situation when He, passing along the Jordan valley, heard the preaching of John the Baptist, and submitted to his baptism. As Mark describes that event he makes it clear to the discerning reader that a new opening came to Jesus then. With many reverent scholars I believe that the voice which said, "Thou art my beloved Son," was a voice in Jesus' own soul. It represents the bursting of the thought upon Him, that He was called to be the Messiah—that the meaning of His unbroken relation to God was that it was His privilege to perform for His countrymen the Messianic mission.

The dawning of this consciousness drove the Saviour into retirement.<sup>1</sup> The call to this new mis-

<sup>1</sup> To those who have been educated on the old categories of thought, it seems at first like a denial of the Deity of Christ to speak of a growth in His consciousness. A little reflection shows that even on the old categories this is not so. A real incarnation involves a real human psychology; God incarnate in a human body without a human mind would be God incarnate in an animal, not in a man. St. Luke saw more clearly. "Jesus grew in wisdom as well as in stature," he tells us. (Luke ii. 52.)



sion had to be adjusted to His inner life—the mission itself had to be adjusted to what He knew of God. This adjustment was a psychological or spiritual process. The story of it is told in the Gospels in objective terms; but this is in accord with the customs of Oriental narrative. The narrative is called the account of the Temptation of Christ.

The heart of these temptations was the decision of what kind of Messiah He would be, and what kind of a Messianic kingdom He would establish. The Jews were expecting a Messiah who would be a supernatural warrior who would sit on an earthly throne triumphant over his enemies, and would rule politically over the bodies of men. As Jesus knew the Father, however, He knew that a kingdom established by such measures would be out of harmony with God, because out of harmony with the highest ethical and spiritual principles. Such a kingdom was not humanity's greatest need.

Men needed more than anything to come directly under the rule of God; to know God, not as a terrible Ruler but as a loving Father. They needed a kingdom of God, but a kingdom founded not on force but on love—a kingdom to which the allegiance of loving souls should bind them in response

to a revelation of God's character; not a kingdom into which they should be swept by violence, and in which they should be kept by fear.

From the temptation Jesus emerged with a new conception of the Messianic kingdom—the kingdom of God—and with a new conception, too, of the mission of the Messiah. The kingdom was to exist first in the spirits of men before it was to have an external organization. It must get into men before men could get into it. Its method of conquest was to be neither arms nor supernatural cataclysms, but loving and unselfish service. The rôle of the Messiah was to be, not that of a political agitator, or a military leader, but that of a teacher, a friend, a neighbour, a physician, a loving companion, a helper, a servant.<sup>1</sup>

There is not time, neither is this the place, to stay to point out the means taken by Jesus to promulgate these views—how He chose the term, "Son of Man," at once to conceal and later to reveal his

<sup>1</sup> Some scholars deny the historical character of the temptation of Jesus, and hold also that He did not claim to be the Messiah. So, for example, Schmidt, *Prophet of Nazareth*, pp. 262 ff. The reasons for denying Schmidt's position, and maintaining the position here set forth, have been stated by the writer in the *International Journal of Ethics*, vol. xvii. pp. 110-120.

Messianic claim. It is our business rather to note the new conception of the kingdom of God here put forth. Jesus took the term out of the realm of politics and transferred it to the realm of religion. He taught by it that it is every man's privilege to come under the direct personal guidance of God, that it is every man's duty to come into intimate personal relations with Him. As the Messiah of such a kingdom He exhibited in His person and experience the ideal of one who enjoyed in their fullness personal relations with the Father, and in His work and teaching He revealed in all their beauty the principles and the spirit of the kingdom.

This teaching concerning the kingdom lifted the kingdom out of the realm of a formal monarchy and translated it into a family. And this fact brings us to the heart of the message of Jesus concerning God. In His teaching God is no longer a far-off ruler, or a stern and terrible judge. God is a loving Father. The parable of the Prodigal Son gives us the heart of His message on this point. The son is thoughtless and selfish; he wanders from the father's house; he degrades himself with a sinful life in a far country; but the father never forgets him, never hates him, never despairs of him. To the end the

father scans the homeward way ready to catch the first glimpse of the repentant boy, that he may hasten to welcome him home.

The heart of the message of Christ is the loving Fatherhood of God. To this He gave a new reality in the minds of men. The early Semites had thought of God as love, but in a gross, physical, sensual way. Hosea had taught that God is a father, but His fatherhood is limited to Israel. In the teaching of Jesus God is the God of the world. His love goes out to all. His kingdom is a large family, in which the Father rules through love. Into this family all are welcomed, as rapidly as they turn from sin and turn their faces with resolution toward the light.

This attitude of ready forgiveness is further illustrated in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. He who would not so much as lift his eyes up to heaven, but smote his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," went down to his house "justified," because his attitude was one of sincere penitence, and God, as a tender Father, hastens to bestow His forgiveness upon such.

This idea of the Fatherhood of God runs through all the teaching of Jesus. In speaking of the fowls

of the air he reminds his disciples that it is "your Father" that feedeth them. The prayer which He taught his disciples begins: "Our Father." The parental relation lies at the basis of Jesus' conception of the kingdom of heaven.

Indeed, the whole message of Jesus concerning God is a reversal of the conceptions of Him which were held by many at that time, and have been held by many during the centuries since. It is very natural, in consideration of the ways in which the conception of God has developed, for the many to think of God as a far-off sovereign and as a terrible judge. Jesus, on the other hand, revealed God as a loving friend who, so far from holding the sinner aloof, wins the sinner from wicked ways by trusting him. This is the teaching of the incident of the woman taken in adultery, a passage which, though now found in the Gospel of John, was, as Tischendorf saw, not written for the connection where it now stands. It is found in some manuscripts after the 21st chapter of Luke, and belongs as much to the Synoptic teaching as to the Gospel of John.

Men meet the sinner—especially the feminine sinner—however penitent she may be, with denunciation, punishment, and scorn. Jesus met this

sinner with trust and kindness, and by these called forth penitence within her. He who worked the works of his Father was not more kind than the Father. He would always teach us that the Father was as kind as He. If Jesus trusted the sinful woman, he would thereby teach us that God trusts the sinner; that in this love the Father's love is manifested. Thus God would win men back to His family, and persuade them to reënter filial relations with Himself.

This was the heart of Jesus' message concerning God. In speaking of the way God wins men we are naturally led to consider Jesus' view of His own relation to the establishment of the kingdom of heaven, or, in other words, the means of redemption and atonement.

The forgiveness which Jesus extended to the sinful woman in the incident just discussed was extended without any reference to atonement, and, indeed, without any profession of faith on her part. This attitude is revealed also in an incident in the early ministry of Christ, recorded in Mark ii. 5, Matt. ix. 2, and Luke v. 20, where Jesus said to the man sick of palsy, "thy sins are forgiven thee." It is true that the evangelists say that He said this



because He saw the faith of those who brought the man, but even so, no statement is made as to the faith of the man himself, and Jesus makes no reference to any means by which forgiveness is to be mediated.

At the beginning then of Jesus' career He speaks of forgiveness much in the terms of the parable of the Prodigal Son. The conditions of forgiveness are not there set forth.

It seems possible from this point to trace a development in the consciousness of Jesus. There is a series of passages in which forgiveness is mediated by His word. One of these is the quotation from Isaiah in Luke iv. 18, 19:—

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,  
Because He hath anointed Me to preach good tidings to  
the poor:  
He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and  
recovering of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty them that are bruised,  
And to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Here forgiveness and salvation are mediated by the Master's word. Again, in Matt. xi. 5, the sign of the Messianic age to which the attention of the discouraged Baptist is called is: "The poor have good tidings preached to them." Again, in Luke xi. 29-32, Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah,

and "behold a greater than Jonah is here" emphasizes the same means—preaching—of bringing the world to God.

The same phase of Christ's teaching appears in the Parable of the Sower (Mark iv. and Matt. xiii.), for in this parable the seed which may be choked, or carried away by the owners of wings, or may perish for lack of depth and moisture, or may bear thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold, is declared by Jesus Himself to be the Word proclaimed by the Son of Man.

In another class of passages Jesus expresses the conviction that forgiveness is mediated by His person. One of the most striking of these passages begins at Matt. xi. 25. Although the chronological setting of this passage is now lost, the phrase "at that season," with which it begins, indicates that originally the consciousness that the place of an individual in the higher life was determined by attitude towards Christ's person came to Jesus at a definite time. This conviction probably marks a stage in the consciousness of the Master. The struggle of His ministry was becoming more severe. The consciousness itself He expressed in these words: "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the

Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal Him. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls."

To the same purpose is Luke xii. 8, 9: "Every one who shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth Me in the presence of men shall be denied in the presence of the angels of God." Similarly, in Matt. xii. 30, we read: "He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad."

As the ministry of Jesus progressed, then, it appears that He passed from the conviction that the simple proclamation of the message of God would bring in the kingdom, to the conviction that in some way His person had a primary function in mediating it.

From this conviction the thought of Jesus passed on to one other, viz., that somehow the mediation of the kingdom involved His death. This conviction seemed to have formed itself clearly in the mind of Jesus towards the close of His ministry,

when at Cæsarea Philippi He finally drew from the disciples the confession of His Messiahship. Immediately afterwards (Mark viii. 31) He "began to teach them that the Son of Man must be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed."

A little later when, on the journey to Jerusalem, the sons of Zebedee made their ambitious request for preferment in the new kingdom, and He had occasion to teach His angry disciples that service, not position, was the great thing in the new realm, He used this comparison (Mark x. 45): "For verily the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." This is not the place to rehearse the theories which in the course of the centuries have been built upon these words. It is enough to notice here that the thing in which men are held captive is sin. It is from sinning that Jesus came to redeem men. The giving of His life was the supreme act of the service by which He sought to accomplish that redemption. He probably did not think, then, of giving His life as a ransom to Satan, or as a ransom paid by God's love to God's justice, nor as a vicarious substitution in bearing the death-penalty of the sinner, nor even

as an example in order to maintain the government of God. He rather thought of it as the act most likely to produce the experience of repentance in the mind of a sinner, and so, on account of its psychological effect on the unrepentant, a principal means of redemption.

Then, lastly, there are the words uttered at the Last Supper (Mark xiv. 23, 24; Matt. xxvi. 27, 28; Luke xxii. 18, 19): "this is My blood of the covenant" (many ancient authorities read "new covenant") "which is shed for many." The word "covenant"—especially if it was "new covenant"—carries the thought back at once to the sealing of the covenant at Mount Sinai (Exodus xxiv. 1-11). In the case of that covenant the sacrifices simply sealed the contract. They bound God and man together in a solemn covenant. By this reference Jesus suggests that His death seals a new covenant between God and man—a covenant which binds the human creature and the Divine Creator together in a higher and better bond.

Looking at the ministry of Jesus as a whole, then, we find that in all parts of it He expressed God's willingness to forgive sin, but that as His ministry progressed He became increasingly impressed with

the difficulty of bringing man to realize the need of forgiveness and to accept it. At first He looked to the mere willingness of God to forgive as all-sufficient. Then He saw at different periods that this willingness would have to be mediated by His preaching, then by His personal influence, and, lastly, by the eloquent pleading of His death.

Throughout all this, however, His one message was God's readiness to forgive, and God's anxious longing to welcome sinners home. The different degrees in the means employed only indicate that as the ministry advanced the Master, who shared with us a real human psychology, became increasingly conscious that to win men the message must be proclaimed, not in word only but with all the magnetic influence of the Divinest personality, and all the moving eloquence of the sublimest self-sacrifice.

If now we turn from the means by which, in the teaching of Jesus, the work of bringing men into the kingdom was to be accomplished, to the ideal which He set before every man, we find His ideal expressed in these words (Matt. v. 48): "Ye, therefore, shall be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." These words, interpreted by



their context, mean that men are to love their neighbours; to be kind, considerate, and unclannish; to be broad in their sympathies, and not vindictive in their attitude to any. They may not equal in the degree of their perfections those of the Infinite Father, but they may become perfect children as He is a perfect Father.

This thought of Jesus set before men a loftier destiny than they had before dared to dream of. It is Hosea's old conception of the sonship of Israel, transfigured by being made ethical, spiritual, and universal.

The whole message of the kingdom of God in all the aspects in which Jesus proclaimed it presented an inner, spiritual side, and an outer, social side. If it involves the idea of God as Father, it also involves the idea of men as children of God and accordingly brethren. Children of the same perfect Father should dwell in harmony and love. Men cannot pray "Our Father," without thinking of one another as brethren. To think of one another as brethren is to abolish war, whether political or industrial; to abolish sweat-shops, and other forms of slavery; and to seek to realise the Divine brotherhood in political and social institutions. To seek to be per-

fect as the Father is perfect is to imitate His attitude of love, of kindliness, and of universal regard for all men. If, then, one starts out simply in his own person to realize the Divine ideal of character as taught by Jesus, it leads to the same end, for this cannot be accomplished without assuming an attitude towards others which must inevitably work the spirit of Christ down into the warp and woof of human institutions.

Approach the problem as we will, therefore—from the side of the kingdom of God, from the point of view of the fatherhood of God, or from the point of view of the self-realisation of the individual—the teaching of Jesus, if really followed, leads us to the same social goal. It looks not only to the creation of a perfect society in heaven, but also the production on this earth of a social fabric which shall in its structure reveal and express through a real brotherhood the Divine love which springs from the common Father.

The teaching of Jesus on this point is very concrete. He had no faith in the coming of the kingdom of God through sentimental dreams which produced no action. The parable of the Good Samaritan is a case in point. The priest who

“passed by on the other side” may have been a very good man. He may have been engaged at the moment in going to bring some money from a Levitical city to expend on the Temple ritual; or he may have been on his way to one of the cities of the Decapolis to persuade some devout soul to become a Jewish proselyte. Such services would correspond to raising money to pay off church debts, or attending to mission-work, or to holding revival meetings now. He may have been of a kindly disposition, too. Possibly he said: “There is a difficult problem. If I were not so hurried with this important church-work I should like to stop and investigate it”! Similarly the Levite may have been engaged in some important religious mission. He may have belonged to the musical division of the Levites, and may have been hurrying to Jerusalem to teach them some new cantillation for the sacred text that was to be read at the next feast. It may not have been entirely due to an exclusive spirit but the pressure of sacred engagements may have led him to “pass by on the other side.” It was only the despised Samaritan schismatic or heretic that had leisure enough to stop and give the sufferer personal attention, and humanity enough to perform the simple duties of

helpfulness which kindness prompted. Does not Jesus teach us here the practical, personal nature of that helpful service which is needed to bring in the kingdom of heaven?

Several books have been written in recent years on the social teaching of Jesus. No writer has shown more convincingly than Dr. Peabody that in the spirit which Jesus inculcates the social and industrial problems of our time find their solution. In the pages of his book<sup>1</sup> it is made clear that no artificial distribution of property will bring in the Millennium; that no industrial legislation will bring about ideal conditions. With broad induction and adequate learning he has convincingly shown that it is only as the spirit of brotherhood as taught by Christ is realized, and employer and employee each become able to look at the other as a brother should, that social and industrial problems can be solved. It is not a change in the machinery of production, nor an alteration in the methods of distribution, nor the levelling of social inequalities by artificial flatirons that will achieve the goal, but change in human nature itself—the replacing of the selfish by the unselfish spirit—

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus Christ and the Social Question.*

the spirit of the animal by the spirit of Christ.

The Message of Christ was a most comprehensive message. It brought to the world a new revelation of God's attitude to man, a new and spiritual conception of the kingdom of God—a conception which translated it into a family of which God is the Father and all men are brethren. It held before the individual as an ideal the realisation in his human life of the spirit and character of the Father, and it looked to the realisation in earthly society of a real human brotherhood.

The Message of Christ is unique in the way in which it combines the loftiest spiritual experiences with the homeliest human duties. At the end of his book, *Jesus Christ and the Christian Character*, Professor Peabody has a chapter entitled "The Ascent of Ethics," in which he shows that in the teaching of Jesus there is no duty however humble, no service however insignificant, that does not rest in the last analysis upon a foundation of the sublimest faith. This chapter is followed by another, entitled "The Descent of Faith," the burden of which is that in the Master's teaching there is no faith so sublime and spiritual that it does not descend to link itself to the homeliest duties.

In the Fatherhood of God, mediated by the teaching, the person, and the sufferings of Christ, this sublime faith is begotten. In the "Descent of Faith" and the "Ascent of Ethics," so that the former finds adequate expression in the latter, the individual is to realise his destiny by the revelation in himself of the Divine image; industrial problems are to be solved and social ills are to be righted, and the kingdom, already potential in the experience of individuals, is to come in an earthly society.



## CHAPTER II

### THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE ACCORDING TO PAUL

THE Apostle Paul holds a unique place in early Christianity. After the earthly life of Jesus had terminated, the Twelve and the other disciples continued the work of the Master, but they continued it as though it were designed especially for the Jews. Christianity became a Jewish sect. It accepted the validity of the Jewish law, and cherished all the hopes of Jewish eschatology. Its moral life may have been a little more noble than that of contemporary Judaism, but otherwise it differed from Judaism only in its belief that Jesus was the Messiah. He had been caught up to heaven, only that, in accordance with the expectations of the apocalyptists, he might, when the age was ripe for the final cataclysm, be revealed again. The Gospel was preached to none but Jews, and no one (except, possibly, Stephen) had an idea that a Gentile could become a Christian without first becoming a Jew.

The man who changed all this and started Chris-

tianity on its career as a universal religion was the Apostle Paul.

St. Paul was a many-sided man. He was at once a Rabbi and a mystic; a man of affairs and an independent thinker; a master of men and a religious devotee. Moreover, in his long life he underwent a marked development in his spiritual thought; his grasp of the significance of Christ and his understanding of his mission steadily increasing to the end. Although his writings have influenced Christian theology more than those of any other man, Paul has been so misunderstood by those whom he has influenced that his impress as stamped upon Christian theology is in reality a caricature of his real thought.

I shall try to set forth, as I understand it, his real thought as he himself shows that it developed in his mind, and we shall thus be able to see the form which the Christian message, as uttered by him, assumed.

The phases of St. Paul's character which had most to do with making him a Christian and in shaping his Christian message were his Rabbinism and his mysticism. His Rabbinism was misunderstood by Augustine and other theologians, and was

mistaken for his real message, whereas it was not the message but only its husk.

We shall find how the two intermingled in his mind, if we trace first the mental processes of his conversion, and then something of the growth of his thought as a Christian.

The key to St. Paul's conversion is found in Gal. iii. 13: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; as it is written, 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.'" "As it is written" is a phrase by which the Old Testament is quoted. If we turn back to the Old Testament we find that Paul has quoted Deut. xxi. 22, 23, a passage which provides that a man who is hanged shall be taken down before nightfall. The reason given for this is, "For he that is hanged is accursed of God; that thou defile not thy land." The point of this Deuteronomic law is just this: God's curse rests upon every man who is hanged; that curse is contagious, and the land must not be exposed to its contagion during the night, or it will be infected thereby. This is a primitive and, if you please, a half-superstitious point of view; but even so I could prove, if time permitted, that it was held by both Jews and Christians until after the time of Paul.

Stated in a different way this view of the law seems more reasonable. All the law is from God; it is accordingly all sacred and all equally binding. To make a distinction between the ritualistic and the moral laws would be rationalism—it would be to intrude the human judgment into a region into which it has no right to enter.

This was the point of view of Paul. The Jews who became Christians before him were less logical than he; but to his mind the law's curse rested upon Jesus because he had been crucified, or hanged on a tree. As he saw Christians multiplying, and increasingly large numbers of Jews swept into the Church, it appeared to him that the contagion of the curse of a hanged man, which the law feared might spread over the land, was actually spreading among the people. For this reason he exerted all his force of character, influence, and industry, to stamp out the curse.

Meantime another influence was at work in Paul's life which made him dissatisfied with the law at the very moment when he so strenuously sought to serve it. There was one law in the Decalogue which Paul could not keep. It was the command, "Thou shalt not covet." The external commands

he could fulfil, but the wanderings of desire he could not control. Now Paul was a most earnest man. He was thorough in all his thought, and not one to consciously tolerate a sham. The struggle which this failure to keep the command against coveting cost him is vividly portrayed in the seventh chapter of Romans.

Intensely zealous for the extermination of the Christians in order to vindicate the law, and crying out inwardly, "Oh wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" because the law failed to satisfy his inner nature, Saul of Tarsus approached Damascus. Before he reached the city Christ appeared to him in that memorable vision—a vision which convinced him that Jesus was risen from the dead. This vision changed his whole life.

Why Paul's life was changed by this vision we can now understand, thanks to the research of recent years. In common with other ancient peoples—Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans—the Hebrews believed that all the dead went down to a cavern under the earth. They called this "Sheol" (see Isaiah xiv. 9, Ezekiel xxxii. 21-31). In the earlier times the Hebrews had believed in no resur-

rection, but by the time of Paul a section of them, including the Pharisees, to which party Paul belonged, looked forward to a resurrection at a great day of judgment which was impending at some time in the future. In all history only two men had, they thought, escaped from Sheol in advance of this resurrection and gone direct to God. These were Enoch and Elijah. Among the Greeks and Babylonians, when mortals escaped the underworld they were thought to become gods. To the monotheistic Hebrews this was impossible; but they did the next best thing. Enoch was made an angel; the very process by which it was done is described to us in one of the apocalypses (Sclav. Enoch, xxii.). Elijah meantime had become a kind of heavenly patron saint, whose revelations and mediation accomplished the most marvellous wonders (cf. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. v. 124ff.).

When, therefore, Paul's vision convinced him that God had honoured Jesus as He had honoured Enoch and Elijah, in spite of the fact that the curse of the law rested upon Him in consequence of His crucifixion, his whole education had prepared him as naturally for the revulsion which followed as it had prepared him to be a persecutor. God could not



have honoured one whose life had been a lie; therefore Jesus must be the Messiah, as He had claimed. The Messiah was a heavenly being closely associated with God (Eth. Enoch, 48-51); Jesus must accordingly be such a being. This was to him proof that Jesus was Divine (Rom. i. 4). Paul therefore became an ardent disciple of Him whom he had just now persecuted. This had a remarkable effect upon his inner life, the results of which we shall trace in a few moments.

This vision of Paul's, which had convinced him of the Messiahship of Jesus, had also a revolutionary effect upon his estimate of the Jewish law. That law had pronounced Jesus accursed because of His crucifixion; God, on the other hand, had honoured Jesus as in all the history of the world he had honoured only Enoch and Elijah, and by so honouring Him had vindicated the Messianic claim of Jesus and His righteousness. The law could not therefore be, as Paul had thought, of universal application. There must be a region—the region in which Jesus dwelt—in which it was not in force. As Paul had previously reasoned that Christians shared the curse of the crucified, so now he reasoned that they shared with Jesus his exemption from the law, and

shared also His righteousness. It was because of this line of thought that Paul could say, "I through the law died to the law that I might live unto God" (Gal. ii. 19). It was possible for a man to be justified now—*i. e.*, pronounced righteous—apart from the works of the law. God had revealed "a righteousness apart from the law" (Rom. iii. 21). It was in this way that Paul saw that when a Jew became a Christian he need no longer keep the Jewish law. Similarly, he saw that if a Gentile became a Christian, he too could find access to God, apart from the law. To the Pharisee it was impossible for a Gentile to approach God without becoming a proselyte and keeping the law. The law was to the Pharisee the one avenue of approach to God, and through it both Jew and Gentile must walk, if they would come near to Him. Paul now saw a path of approach to God for the Gentiles apart from the law, if Gentiles identified themselves with Jesus. Gentiles even could share the favour God bestowed on Jesus, in spite of the curse of the law. The bond written in ordinances—that is, the requirements of the Jewish law—which was contrary to us—which was a middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile—Jesus has taken out of the way, Paul

declares, nailing it to His cross (Col. ii. 13, 14). It was thus that Paul obtained his Gospel for the Gentiles, and became the Apostle to the Gentiles. It was for this reason that go where he would, let him but preach to the Jews and sooner or later a mob drove him away. His message was subversive of fundamental Jewish institutions.

We have thus briefly traced from Paul's Rabbinical training the rise of his Rabbinical philosophy.<sup>1</sup> It was to him as real as the doctrine of decrees to a Calvinist, or the doctrine of evolution to a thinker of the present day. It was the Jewish philosophy of the time, and it could but have a fundamental influence upon him. It is, as I shall show in a moment, but half his thought, or not even that. It made him a persecutor, however; it helped to make him a Christian; it made him the Apostle to the Gentiles.

When Paul speaks of the death of Christ he has, except in a few rare instances, this philosophy in mind. Christ died but once, and that was on the cross; His blood was shed but once, and that was on the cross. Whether he speaks of the death of

<sup>1</sup> For fuller statements, see C. C. Everett's *Gospel of Paul*, Houghton Mifflin, 1903, and the writer's "Spiritual Development of Paul" in the *New World*, viii. pp. 111-124.

Christ, the shedding of the blood of Christ, or the crucifixion of Christ, he always has this Rabbinic sort of a philosophy in mind. Men ignorant of this philosophy have thought they found in Paul a doctrine of vicarious substitution, and have proclaimed this as the heart of Paul's Christian message. In reality the doctrine of vicarious substitution is as foreign to Paul as the doctrine of evolution is. The Rabbinic philosophy which has been mistaken for substitution is not even the heart of Paul's message. It was only the axe which cleared away the forests of Jewish particularism, that the seed of the kingdom might find a lodgment.

The real gospel of Paul—his powerful conception of the Christian message which enabled him to do his work—was his doctrine of the mystic union of Christ and the believer. Indeed with Paul this was more than a doctrine; it was a living experience. The recognition of this brings us to another aspect of Paul's vision near Damascus. We have traced its influence on his thought, but it had also a creative effect on his heart-life.

We know that this is true from the way in which Paul always referred to this experience. He speaks of it in Gal. i. 16 as God revealing his Son in me.

In Rom. vii. and viii. he contrasts the old life under the law with the fact that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." In Gal. ii. 20 he declares "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me."

In this experience Paul's thirst for righteousness found satisfaction. The control of his desires which he was unable to accomplish alone, and which made him cry out so pathetically, "Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" was now accomplished by union with the indwelling Christ, so that he could sing, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." This mystic union with Christ, which had given his own life such emancipation, such poise and power, was the heart of his Christian message.

Before endeavouring to study in detail Paul's doctrine of union with Christ, let us glance at his conception of Christ Himself. His doctrine of Christ was not a fixed quantity, but came to maturity through development. It is a progressive, not a static doctrine.

We have already noted how at his conversion Paul accepted Jesus as the Messiah. From the

background of his thought which we gather from Jewish apocalypses, we know that he, from that moment, regarded Christ as a heavenly being closely associated with God. When Paul wrote his Thessalonian letters fifteen to twenty years later, his thought of Christ, in so far at least as it is revealed in what he says, had not progressed beyond this point.

Christ is the Son of God (1 Thess. i. 10; 1 Thess. ii. 1), and is associated with the Father in the administration of Divine Providence (1 Thess. iii. 11). Whether this is a position higher than that ascribed to the Messiah in pre-Christian apocalypses is disputed. Possibly it is slightly in advance of contemporary Jewish positions. But the rôle assigned to the Messiah in these epistles is thoroughly Jewish, as is the whole conception of the world and its fortunes. Sheol is a cavern under the earth; the dead are sleeping there, awaiting a general resurrection which will take place when Christ descends from heaven (1 Thess. iv. 13-18). Christ has ascended to heaven, but it is the chief business of the believer to await His return (1 Thess. i. 9, 10). When He comes He will destroy the wicked by the breath of His mouth (2 Thess. ii. 8). The whole of

the religious philosophy revealed in these two epistles is Jewish. Paul differed from the Jews at this period only in his belief that Jesus was the Messiah, and that His crucifixion had for the Christian abolished the law. In his next great group of epistles, written in the years 55-58, he was passing through great struggles. He had, too, been for a longer time employed in the endeavour to extend Christianity to the world in which Greek ideas reigned. Both these facts helped, no doubt, to work changes in his thought.

Christ is now to him more than the Messiah; he is the "image of God" (2 Cor. iv. 4), "wisdom from God" (1 Cor. i. 30), the mirror in which we with unveiled face see God reflected (2 Cor. iii. 18). He is also the perfect or typical man, the norm of the redeemed race (Rom. v. 12-21; 1 Cor. xv. 45-49). As his conception of Christ becomes in these epistles more spiritual and vital, his Jewish conceptions of death and the last things fade from his mind. Thus it happens that we find him in 2 Cor. v. emancipated from the Jewish conception of the long sleep in Sheol which he had held when he wrote to the Thessalonians. He here conceives the alternative to "being in the body" "departing to be with



Christ." The necessity of waiting for Christ to descend from heaven he no longer believes; the believer goes to be with Christ instead. Some scholars have, it is true, doubted the reality of this change of thought, because Paul, like others who reach important and epoch-making changes comparatively late in life, never altogether adjusted his vocabulary to the change. Of the change itself, it seems to me, however, there can be no doubt.

In his third group of epistles—those written during the Roman captivity—we find Paul's ripest thought. Under the pressure of incipient Gnostic thought he had undergone still further development. Christ was now to him not the localized Jewish Messiah, but the world-Spirit, the world-Soul, the embodiment of the creative energy of God by which the world was created and by which it is held together (Col. i. 13-17), the embodiment in flesh of the Divine image and energy (Phil. ii. 6-11). He here anticipated in principle many features of the Logos-doctrine of the Gospel of John.

Christ as the world-Soul—the vitalizing energy which holds the world together—is quite a different conception from the localized and anthropomorphic Jewish Messiah. For such a Christ to need to come

from a distant heaven would be a contradiction in terms. Could this development in Paul's thought from the Jewish to the cosmic Christ have been appreciated, how many Second Adventist vagaries the Church might have been spared!

It is no accident that Paul's expressions about union with Christ are found in his second and third groups of epistles, for it is in these groups that he reveals his conception of the spiritual and cosmic Christ. A mystic union with a spiritual Christ was now possible, such as was at least difficult with a Jewish Messiah who had withdrawn to the distant heavens.

The first thing we notice in connection with Paul's mysticism is that it affords a counterpart in experience to the Rabbinical outline of the Apostle's thought which we have already traced. The death on the cross by which Christ had incurred the curse of the law, and the resurrection by which God had proved that He honoured Christ in spite of the curse of the law, as we have seen, emancipated all who identified themselves with Christ from the demands of the Old Testament law, according to Paul's view, but its effect did not end there. It afforded a parallel to the inner experience of the

Christian. As Christ was crucified, so the Christian must be crucified to sin. As Christ went down into death, so must the believer die to his old self. As Christ was raised to a life of glory with God—a life superior to all the limitations of his earthly career—so the Christian is raised to a new life. All this Paul believed went on in the soul of the believer here and now. It was not a felicity for which one must wait till the gates of death are passed. Thus, in writing to the Romans he says (vi. 3-11), "Are ye ignorant that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried, therefore, with him through baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united to Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection; knowing this that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for he that hath died is justified from sin. But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more domin-

ion over Him. For the death that He died He died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus."

The analogy between the death and resurrection of Christ and the inner experiences of the Christian which is here drawn out at such length, had been more briefly expressed in the Epistle to the Galatians as the apostle's own experience. He says (ii. 20), "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

It is clear then that Paul believed that the death and resurrection of Christ were mystically lived over in inner experience by every Christian. It was this which made him a Christian. The passage from Galatians just quoted carries us, however, a step further into Paul's mystical conception, for it makes it clear that he believed that Christ Himself actually lived in one who had died to sin and entered into this resurrection life. "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me," implies complete union

with Christ, so that what I do Christ does ; what I suffer He suffers ; my triumphs are His triumphs.

Of similar meaning are the following passages : "As many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 27) ; "My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. iv. 19) ; "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1) ; "In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 22) ; "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, to the end that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God" (Eph. iii. 17-19) ; "God was pleased to make known the riches of His glory among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27) ; "For ye died that your life might be hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3).

That Paul believed in a real union of the believer with Christ there can be no doubt. His conviction is expressed in accordance with his habit in many ways and with great variety of metaphor. At times

Christ is in the believer, and at times the believer is in Christ. At times the believer lives by faith, and at times he does not live at all, but only Christ lives in him. But, however he expresses it, there can be no doubt of his meaning.

The result of this union is that the Christian is no longer fleshly but spiritual; he leads no longer an earthly but a heavenly life. This is the meaning of such utterances as the following:—"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. viii. 2); "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law. And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts thereof" (Gal. v. 22-24); "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Ephes. ii. 10); "The fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Ephes. v. 9); "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13); "We all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. iii. 18).

Again, this spiritual and perfectly ethical life made the Christian, so Paul believed, absolutely free. No law of any sort longer had dominion over him. A man so divine, so united to Christ, was in the possession of the completest ethical liberty, because, being spiritual and divine, his nature is its own law and needs no other. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," Paul exclaims (2 Cor. iii. 17). This is also shown in his treatment in 1 Corinthians of a case of social immorality. The easy way would have been to say, "this is contrary to the moral law—to the Pentateuch." Paul, however, does not take the easy way. He is true to his principles, declaring, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. vi. 12). He flees from fornication, not because it violates a Decalogue, but because it destroys his Christian liberty by bringing him under the power of a harmful habit. If the Christian lives according to his own inner nature, he cannot pursue a course of sin which would destroy that nature. In this very connection he asserts again the real union of the Christian with Christ, declaring "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (v. 17).



What a noble conception of a Christian life! How different a world it would be if Christians had enough of the Divine Spirit to live the ideal life, not because of external rules, but because of the compulsion of their inner beings!

This ideal life, in Paul's view, made one a sharer of Christ's work and Christ's sufferings. A part of the mystic experience was, as Paul conceived it, "To know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the *fellowship of His sufferings*" (Phil. iii. 10). This desire to enter into fellowship with the sufferings of Christ was on the part of the great Apostle no morbid brooding over the death of Jesus, nor an ascetic mortification of the body because its death would be an end in itself; it was rather a desire to complete the work which Christ's sufferings had begun, for in Col. i. 24 he says, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." Fellowship with Christ's sufferings meant that Christ's work could in that way be made effective to more of those whom Christ would win. It was an expression of this same thought when Paul wrote, "I am a debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians,

both to the wise and to the foolish. So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome" (Rom. i. 14, 15). Again, in writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. ix. 16), he says, "Necessity is laid upon me; for woe is me if I preach not the gospel."<sup>1</sup>

The living out of this Divine life which made one free from the law would, if the inner impulse found real expression, lead to participation in the work of Christ—to active labour for the spread of His Kingdom. The mysticism of Paul was of a thoroughly healthy type. It meant no impractical absorption into the ineffable, but inspiration for the most self-sacrificing toil.

There can be no doubt that Paul believed in a real union of the believer with Christ—a union which made the believer's life a divine life. And yet he never went to the extreme of some modern fanatics and lost his Christian modesty. He speaks of Christians as perfect, it is true—"Let us, therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded" (Phil. iii. 15), meaning by the expression that they have all

<sup>1</sup> The author desires to acknowledge his indebtedness to an article by Professor McGiffert on "Mysticism in the Early Church," in the *American Journal of Theology*, vol. xi. pp. 407-427.

the elements of life now that this Divine element is present in them, but in the same connection he makes it clear that, though he had been a Christian for many years, he found the life with Christ so infinite that he had not grasped it all. The goal had been in part experienced, but it was a flying goal. Thus he says (Phil. iii. 8 ff.), "Yea, verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffer the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith: that I may know him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not that I have already obtained, or am made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward

the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

If then the thoroughgoing mysticism of Paul at times almost takes our breath away, we must admit that it is a thoroughly practical and sane mysticism. While he taught the identification of the believer with Christ until the two were one, he taught also that it was an identity effected for service and through service, and held it in such sanity as to keep the believer humbled with a sense of his own incompleteness in comparison with the infinite perfectness of God.

In brief, then, the Christian message as it was conceived by Paul presented a twofold aspect. It declared to the Jew that if he would but unite himself to Christ, all the onerous burdens of the ritual law were abolished. It declared to the Gentile that on similar conditions all ritual was abolished for him. These conclusions were reached by Paul and were advocated through the agency of a Rabbinic reasoning, which, while thoroughly in harmony with the Judaism of the period, is meaningless now. This aspect of Paul's message was temporary. It was incidental to the period; it served to give his message a hearing at the time,

but it was not that which gave his message its power. The heart of his message—that which brought thousands to Christ as the result of his labours—was the union with Christ, the escape from sin, the entrance into the Divine life, and the joy, not only of living, but of service, which that union offered. God had shown Himself in Christ to be not the God of the Jew only, but of all the world. Any member of the human race might come into real and vital union with Him in Christ. Distinctions as between Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, slave or free man, man or woman, all disappeared. All were welcome through Christ to God; and all were dignified by being given, if they accepted the welcome, a share in Christ's life, Christ's suffering, Christ's work, Christ's purity, Christ's joy, and Christ's glory. Such was the Christian message on the lips of Paul.

He found Christianity a Jewish sect; he left it a universal religion. At first his conception of it differed from that of the other Apostles chiefly in his conception of the abolition of the law by the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ: but by steady progress of thought, brought about by the advance in experience of Christ while labouring in the multi-

farious conditions of a polyglot world and contending with the eddies and whirlpools of the world's many-sided thought, he passed from the conception of Christ as the Jewish Messiah to Christ as the creative world-Spirit, who, laying aside voluntarily His glory and heavenly dignity, out of love for men humbled Himself to the death on the cross. Paul in this picture of Christ anticipated the method by which the Johannine writer adapted the Christian message to the thinking world at the end of the century. On the road between the two points indicated he had cast his Jewish notions of eschatology to the winds.

To no person in history, except Christ Himself, does Christianity owe more than to Paul.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE IN THE JOHANNINE WRITINGS

FOR our present purpose we shall confine our attention to the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John. Let it not be understood that by so doing we undervalue the other writings which are connected with the name of John. We do this because the Second and Third Epistles of John are too personal and private in their nature to illustrate so well the great principles which shine forth in the Gospel and First Epistle, and because the message of the Book of Revelation is too manifold, and is involved in too many critical questions, even if it were John's (which is in doubt), to be presented in one lecture.

The Book of Revelation belongs to the class of apocalypses of which the Jews produced many. Apocalypses fulfilled a useful purpose in times of distress, but their thought was clearly transitory. The primary conception of Revelation, that the



Second Coming of Christ is to occur in a cataclysm, is not entertained by the Gospel of John, which regards the coming of the Spirit as the Second Coming of Christ (chapters xv., xvi.). Present-day criticism is agreed that the Book of Revelation was in part compiled from Jewish sources.<sup>1</sup>

The Gospel and First Epistle of John are, however, in a different class. It is the unanimous verdict of scholars that they are the work of the same author. Their purpose is the same. Though the circumstances which called them forth may have been slightly different, the message of the one is in spirit identical with that of the other, and in form the complement of it.

These books were written, either in the last decade of the first century, or the first decade of the second, in Asia Minor. They were both written to meet certain phases of Gnosticism, and for that purpose they present the Christian message in a form adapted to that end.

The author of these books is shrouded in mystery. There are still able scholars who hold that he was John the son of Zebedee, though there is a growing

<sup>1</sup> See an article by the writer: "The Apocalypse and Recent Criticism," in the *American Journal of Theology*, vol. ii., pp. 776-801.

conviction in the minds of many scholars that the author cannot have been he. In one important respect, however, scholars are coming to an agreement: both schools admit that whoever was the author, there is in the Gospel an ideal element—that things did not always happen just as they are portrayed here,<sup>1</sup> but that mingled with a tradition of our Saviour more or less genuine are the author's ideals and conceptions.

This point needs, perhaps, a little illustration. In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus does not announce Himself at first as the Messiah; He assumes a title which we can see had a Messianic significance (I mean the title "Son of Man"), but which the disciples did not recognize as such until the ministry was nearly ended, when at Cæsarea Philippi he drew forth from Peter the confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." In other words, the first three Gospels portray a historical development, picturing the growth of the Messianic consciousness in the mind of Jesus Himself, showing how, as a great teacher, He attracted the notice, won the confidence, and gained the love of the disciples, and after months of companionship dis-

<sup>1</sup>So Sanday, *Criticism of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 179, ff.

closed to them His Messianic consciousness and Messianic claim. All this is not only asserted by our earliest Gospels, but is in accord with all that we know of the psychological development of the soul, and of tactful, pedagogical method. It is probably the true historical picture.

The Gospel of John presents a very different picture. In it Jesus, instead of announcing His Messiahship to a select few after months of preparation, makes it known in the first chapter to Nathaniel, a comparative stranger. Instead of speaking of it quietly to a few disciples in retirement, this Gospel represents Him as arguing it throughout His ministry, often publicly and in the spirit of a dogmatic theologian, with the Pharisees. We are compelled to confess that the author has in this portrayal lost the historical perspective and introduced an ideal element of his own. We must not, however, judge him too harshly for this. Irenæus long ago told the world that this Gospel was written to oppose the errors of Cerinthus, a Gnostic Jew, who held a position intermediate between the Gnostics, the Jews, and the Christians. Cerinthus distinguished the Maker of the world from God, and held peculiar notions about the Messiahship of Jesus, contending

that it began at the time of His baptism. The argument of the Gospel was directed, in part at least, against these heresies. The author declares that his purpose in writing was (xx. 31): "That ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name," but it is evident that, as he endeavoured to confirm faith, he also tried to correct error. The errors which this writer sought to correct were in reality largely Gnostic. Gnosticism was a syncretistic and eclectic system of thought. Its most fundamental conception—that there were two gods, one evil and one good, and that the evil god created matter—was of Persian origin, though slightly modified. Gnosticism also contained many elements from many different sources. As a philosophy it was an endeavour to solve the problem of the world and of life; as embodied in organization it presented a variety of schools or sects. Gnosticism represented the world-thought of the period.<sup>1</sup>

In his endeavour to meet this world-thought the writer of the Gospel was led to give an interpretation of the person of Christ, to lift Him out of His narrow Jewish environment, and to estimate His

<sup>1</sup> See E. F. Scott, *The Fourth Gospel*.

racial and cosmic significance. It is this part of the Fourth Gospel which constitutes one of its most valuable features—a feature of permanent importance to Christianity. The Gospel of Mark had presented Christ as a remarkable teacher amid a circle of friends—a wonder-worker amid the sick and suffering. It had represented God as shining through this man, but it left Jesus as a local figure in history, with His relations to the world beyond the bounds of Judaism almost entirely undefined. The Gospel of John, on the other hand, lifts the Saviour out of the narrow bounds of the circle of Jewish disciples and enemies, and seeks to give Him His proper perspective in relation to the universe.

This endeavour of the writer of the Gospel was not the first of the kind. Paul had, in his third group of Epistles, notably in Philippians and Colossians, begun this work on the very plan which this Gospel follows. In this Gospel, however, the great thoughts involved are expressed with a simplicity and a beauty, and, in accord with the Hellenistic-Jewish doctrines of the time, developed to a logical completeness, which are unique in the New Testament.

Let us see what the message of this Gospel is in

regard to Christ. We are all familiar with its opening words: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was divine.<sup>1</sup> All things were made by Him. . . . And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory. . . . No man hath ever seen God, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath interpreted Him."

It is perhaps difficult for us to grasp all that this evangelist intended to denote by the term "Word." The term had descended through two long lines of ancestry, the one Greek, where through six hundred years of history, from Heraclitus to John, it had played a prominent part; the other Hebrew, where the Divine Word had often been so personified that it could at times be represented as sent on missions by itself. Philo, an Alexandrian Jewish philosopher (20 B.C.—40 A.D.), had fused the two, making the word a Divine entity, sometimes almost identical with God Himself. Modifying and improving Philo's conception, this evangelist seems to use the term to represent God's self-revealing power. That part of God's nature or activity by which He made

<sup>1</sup> The verse does not say the Word was the Absolute God ( $\delta\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ ), but that it belonged to the God-class ( $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ ).

the world and created all living things (thus revealing His skill and His power) became incarnate, he tells us, in Jesus Christ. The Divine-human personality of the Saviour thus becomes a higher, a more articulate, and a more intelligible revelation of God than any that had been made before.

Whatever we may be compelled to think about the historical perspective of the Gospel of John, and whatever our age, or succeeding ages, may think of the Hellenistic philosophy which moulded its expressions, the message of this book regarding Christ can never be out-dated. In that matchless personality, of spotless character, possessing a unique consciousness of God's fatherhood, a character of unparalleled unselfishness and beneficence, and a power which the death of the body enhanced rather than quenched, men from age to age turn for their highest revelation of God. By whatever theory we may explain the relation of Jesus of Nazareth to the preëxistent Son of God, no Christianity long retains its power which does not gain its inspiration from the central thought of this Gospel—that God was in Christ, that God through the personality of Jesus speaks to us of love, of forgiveness, of hope, of power, in a way unique in



the annals of human history. God incarnate—the infinite personality interpreted through the one ideal man whom our planet has known—such is Jesus Christ.

The effort of the Fourth Gospel to prove the Messiahship of Jesus is a recognition of the fact that the coming of the supreme revelation of God constituted the culmination of a long process of history. It did not drop from heaven full-flowered, without warning or preparation, but followed those laws of Divine development so abundantly revealed in the world about us, which Jesus in His parable so happily and succinctly characterized: "First the blade, then the ear, and afterward the full corn in the ear." In a generation such as ours, this recognition of historic connections and perspective should be appreciated.

The point just touched upon is not peculiar to the Gospel of John, since the other Gospels also insist upon it when they teach that Jesus is the Messiah. In its conception of Messianic work the Gospel of John is, however, unique. According to the Synoptics the glory of the Messianic work is to be manifested in a cataclysmic coming of the kingdom of God, when the Son of Man shall appear on the

clouds of heaven, and the glory of God shall be revealed. John, on the other hand, conceives the earthly life of Jesus, even before His crucifixion, to have revealed or manifested the glory of God. He tells us that Jesus said in His great prayer: "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work that Thou gavest Me to do. . . ." And, again: "I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word." It is true that in the view of this evangelist miracles were "signs" by which the Messiah manifested His glory, but it is also true that he saw in the personality of Jesus, with its spotless purity, its matchless symmetry, its radiant helpfulness and unequalled power, a revelation of God.

In this thought the evangelist caught the true point of view of his Master: glory is service; true exaltation is found in living nobly the common life; the glory of God is manifested in character, healing strength, self-sacrifice and love.

The most significant thing about the message of this Gospel concerning Christ is, however, the fact that all this leads up to the message of the Gospel concerning God. We all recall the touching

scene portrayed in ch. xiv. The disciples are sad because Jesus is to be taken from them, and Philip, seeking for some solace to the general sorrow, sighed as many a soul in its sorrow and hunger has sighed: "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us." The answer of Jesus is most memorable: "Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father?" Here we are specifically taught the Christ-likeness of God. Would we know what God is like, look at Jesus Christ. No part of the Gospel message is more simple, more sublime, or more fundamental than this.

The ethics of every man breathe forth his conception of God. If, like the ancient Assyrians, one believes that his god is simply one among many, and that his god is striving for the mastery, a man will necessarily hold that the devotees of the supernatural enemies of his god possess no rights which he is bound to respect, and when he conquers them will have no hesitation in flaying his victims alive, or cutting out their tongues. If, like Cromwell, his God is the God of the Book of Judges, he will be hard, ruthless and savage in his treatment of ene-

mies; religion will consist largely of creed and the winning love which melts the heart when revealed through kindly deed will find little place. If, like the author of Ecclesiastes, one thinks of God as an unfeeling, inescapable, all-powerful Fate—one who capriciously rewards the evil man with blessings and the good man with misfortunes; one whose purposes and principles of action we cannot hope to understand; one must either commit suicide, or adopt the oft-repeated strain of Qoheleth, "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labour. . . . This is vanity," *i. e.*, this quickly passes away. Make the most of the little chance for such comforts as this life affords, and they are, for the most part, physical comforts, for this is our only chance—such is the Gospel of Ecclesiastes. Such a gospel springs naturally out of Qoheleth's conception of God. It is a gospel which makes of man only a higher animal. He may be a beastly and gluttonous, or a learned and pedantic, animal, but he is still only an animal.

How different is the life of one who accepts the message of the Fourth Gospel hardly needs to be portrayed. God is like Christ—not a blind, unfeel-

ing, inexorable, incomprehensible Fate, but, like Jesus, loving, gentle, helpful, self-sacrificing; one to whom no cry is put up in vain, one who does not let even an insignificant sparrow fall to the ground without His sympathetic care and tender help. If this be true, how different is the universe of him who knows it from the universe of one who knows it not! Not greater is the contrast between day and night, between a healthful, joyous life and slow perpetual torture.

In this message of the Gospel of John a perennial need of human nature is supplied. God is like Christ—as sensitive to our woes as Jesus was to the sufferings of agonizing men and women, as ready to forgive our sins as was He who cried from a Roman cross, “Father, forgive them!” as ready to enable us to overcome our weaknesses and temptations as was the great Teacher of Nazareth to transform an impulsive and wayward Peter into a dauntless apostle; a doubting Thomas into a man of triumphant faith; or a son of thunder into an apostle of love.

All that makes Christianity a more excellent religion than Judaism, Buddhism, or Mohammedanism goes back ultimately to this fundamental message—the Christ-likeness of God.

This supreme revelation of the essential moral and religious nature of God finds its complement in this evangelist's metaphysical definition of God, viz.: "God is spirit." This thought, too, was fundamental and epoch-making. If God is spirit, He does not need the food offered in animal sacrifices. If He is spirit, He is not confined to one locality, whether that locality be Zion or Gerizim, Gothic cathedral or Quaker meeting-house. "They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Wherever this truth is really apprehended, the relation of individual souls to God will be transformed, for "spirit with spirit can meet," and all expressions of public worship will be simplified and ennobled.

Great as is the message of this Gospel with regard to Christ—great as it is with regard to God—it is equally great in its declaration of the exalted privileges and destiny of mankind. Christ was the only begotten son of God, but "to as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become sons of God." The purpose of the coming of the Son of God into the world was to make sons of God of us. God became incarnate in Him, that through Him He might become incarnate in us all; such is the

simple, sublime, dazzling message of this Gospel. This message does not rest upon one text, but crops up again and again. "I in them and thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one," is, according to this Gospel, Christ's own ideal as expressed in His prayer. A vital mystic union with Christ and God, so that we share the life, the impulses, the purposes, and the love of both; it is this, according to the Gospel of John, to be a Christian.

But this is not all the message. Christians may not only share God's life, but they are in the world to do His work. "As Thou didst send Me into the world, even so sent I them into the world," says the Saviour. Sent into the world as Christ was sent into the world! Sent to reveal the character of God! Sent to be a christ wherever one may live. What a responsibility! What a privilege! We hesitate to believe this message, our lives are so poor and mean and our faith so weak. If our modern science teaches us anything, it teaches that the full powers of a life can never be enjoyed by an organism which refuses to perform all the functions of its life. Until we really abandon ourselves to be like Christ and to do His work we shall never know what



it is to be united in one spirit of love and power with Him ~~and~~ with God.

It often happens that a writer is profoundly influenced by systems of thought which he rejects. Apocalyptic Judaism had given up hope that the world-order could be redeemed; it was to be destroyed in a great cataclysmic upheaval. Gnosticism, too, regarded the world as the work of an evil god and as hopelessly corrupt. The author of this Gospel, while rejecting both Judaism and Gnosticism, like them had no hope for the redemption of the world. He represents Christ as saying: "I pray not for the world, but for those whom Thou hast given Me" (xvii. 9); the world passeth away and the lust thereof (1 Jno. ii. 17). He thus placed on the Gospel a serious limitation, making it apply to an elect number only. This limitation is a serious defect in the author's presentation of the Christian message, though in reality it affected the writer only in certain moods. Sometimes he rises to a fine universalism and declares God's love for the world (iii. 16).

We turn now to the First Epistle of John, an epistle which was evidently called forth by teachers who were Docetists, *i. e.*, they taught that Jesus was

not really the Christ—He only seemed to be. They were also libertines—they held that a Christian man is bound by no law, and that he is under no obligation to observe the commands of God, since he is above all law; that no sin is possible to him, even though he live in disregard of all precepts, human and Divine.

In opposition to this the author of this Epistle teaches that it is a prime condition, both of the knowledge and the love of God, that we keep His commandments. He makes it clear by statements both positive and negative that Christianity has in it no place for antinomianism. "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments," he declares (v. 3); again, "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (ii. 4). "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also to walk even as He walked" (ii. 6). "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him" (iii. 6).

In the view of this writer, then, the Christian religion is bound up with the moral law. No one can know so much of God that he is emancipated from the necessity of personal purity, self-control,

common honesty, and the duties of common kindness and humanity.

Such errors in the theory of conduct are in the writer's view closely bound up with errors of theology. The men who deny that Jesus has come in the flesh as the Messiah, deny the Father as well as the Son he declares (ii. 22, 23). He means that these men have entirely misconceived the nature of God. They have thought of Him as a Being far away, too holy to come into contact with corrupt matter; too superior to be touched with any feeling for human infirmity. They have missed altogether the fundamental fact of the Christ-likeness of God. Their views of life were false because their views of God were wrong.

The necessities of the situation led this great thinker to assert the necessity of belief in the Messiahship of Jesus—that Jesus is the Christ; for one cannot believe in the Christ-likeness of God—the goodness and kindness of God—unless he believes in the intimate relation of Jesus to God, and accepts Christ as the revelation of the Father. If God is not manifested in Jesus, the supreme character of the race, we know nothing of His nature. The author's position, then, is: right conduct is abso-

lutely essential, but right conduct is impossible without right views of God, and right views of God are impossible apart from the revelation of His character made in Christ.

The Epistle was, however, not only written to oppose error but to set forth an alluring truth—a truth strong enough to overcome the seemingly unconquerable obstacle which stands in the way of everyone.

This obstacle is the necessity of keeping God's law. That law is pure, holy, incomparably high. We are weak, imperfect, prone to sin. How can we keep the law? When we would do good, evil is present with us, as St. Paul said.

The alluring truth which this Epistle opposes to these hard facts is the truth already set forth in the Gospel, that God invites man to enter into a fellowship with Him in Jesus Christ—a fellowship which binds man to God in such a real union of life and of power that the demands of the highest law can be met and kept. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God" (iii. 1). "Ye know that He [Christ] was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him is no sin" (iii. 5). "Whosoever abideth

in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him" (iii. 6). "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another (ii. 5, ff.). "God is love and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God in him" (iv. 16). "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (ii. 17).

In such passages as these this great writer sets forth the perfect character of God. Light and darkness are in his vocabulary moral terms. "God is light" is an assertion of His moral perfectness. "God is love" asserts His social and religious perfection. "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship," affords the key to the great secret of fulfilling the law. "He that abides in love abides in God" approaches the same great secret from the side of religion. Fellowship with God, union with Him in life, in love, in moral purpose, and in moral triumph—thus abiding in God and so gaining eternal life—such is

the Christian message as voiced in this Epistle.<sup>1</sup>

I have already indicated how the message of this Epistle is in reality the message of the Gospel put in another way. When the two are taken together, these writings present a sublime theology, as well as (if we disregard the limitation noted above) the most exalted theory of human destiny.

"God is spirit," "God is light," and "God is love"—God perfect metaphysically, bright and illuminating morally, fundamentally social and religious in His nature—where shall we look for a theology more satisfying to the intellect, or which appeals more to the soul? If we ask for fuller definition of God's love, if we would have it described or exemplified, we are pointed to Jesus Christ. God is like Him. Love was never more sublimely revealed than in Jesus. His love is in reality God's love.<sup>2</sup>

These conceptions are not only beautiful and satisfying, but they are ultimate. So far as we can

<sup>1</sup> The writer acknowledges his indebtedness to the treatment of this subject by Professor McGiffert, both in his *Apostolic Age* and his article, "Mysticism in the Early Church," in the *American Journal of Theology*, vol. xi. pp. 407-457.

<sup>2</sup> It is my conviction that this picture of God really goes back to Jesus Himself. It is here called the Johannine conception of God, because it first found literary expression in the work of this writer.

at present see, no higher idea of God can be formed until man shall develop some higher powers than those which he now possesses.

"Immortal love, forever full,  
Forever flowing free,  
Forever shared, forever whole,  
A never-ebbing sea."

One hardly needs to point out that the Johannine message to man is the supreme message of the mystics—union with God. Sin is to be overcome in the Divine fellowship; conformity to the highest and most rigorous law is achieved through the Divine power; human destiny is to be realised in the Divine sonship; an anointing or a Christening (the reception of a portion of the real Christ spirit) is to be received which will teach and guide one; the individual is to become one with Christ and the Father; is to abide in God; is to be sent forth as a christ into the world (*i. e.* as an interpreter of God), and because united with God, though "the world pass away" and all its pursuits, the believer "shall abide forever."

This exalted message of human privilege and triumph is the complement of the exalted Johannine message concerning God. So far as I can see, it is as final as the other. Men need some new faculties



before they can appreciate the privileges of any higher destiny. When this Johannine message is experienced by the Church and translated into life, the Kingdom of God will have come

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE IN THE EASTERN CHURCH

To do justice to the Christian message of a single great man in a few pages—*i.e.* to present it in a fully rounded outline is impossible. Much more impossible is it to present adequately in a chapter the Christian thought of a great section of the Church through eighteen hundred years.

While we cannot do this adequately, there are, nevertheless, certain instructive outlines which we may even in this brief compass follow, and if we bear in mind that in each generation streams of Christian experience and devotion, deep and rich, have been constantly flowing in spite of all theology, we shall not even in this hasty glance do injustice to the continuous Christian life.

I have called this chapter the "Christian Message in the Eastern Church." By the Eastern Church we mean the Church in Asia, in the Nile Valley, and in Europe as far West as Greece. In this division Italy belongs to the West as does Carthage

in North Africa. Greece, however, faced to the Eastward. Her racial connections were with Asia Minor, and her tendencies of thought in the period before us were with that East which through the influence of Alexander the Great and his successors she had in part Hellenized. Some things which we have to say of the Eastern Church in the early centuries apply also to the West. While there were certain marked differences of tendency in the two sections even in the second century, the real division between the two did not come till later.

In passing from the New Testament to the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, one feels as though he had passed from the fertile Tropics far toward the sterile country of the Poles, so arid and uninspiring are the writings of these men in comparison with Paul and the Johannine Books. As, however, Professor Dobschütz has shown in his great book, *Christian Life in the Primitive Church*, the life of the Churches maintained for centuries a purity, an elevation and an unselfishness which attracted millions to her. It was this lofty impulse to Christian living—an impulse which did not spend itself for some centuries—which after more than two centuries of persecution finally compelled a Roman

emperor to make Christianity the legal religion of the Empire. If then we confine our attention to other things, it must not be thought that we ignore or undervalue the noble life of the early Christians, in which was powerfully voiced to the world in a practical and convincing way the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

The message of Christianity in this ancient Church was shaped by conflict with the seething thought of the world. This thought affected Christians here and there as it mingled with their Christianity, producing variations from the received type of Christian thinking. Such variations were called "heresies," *i.e.* private "choices." In struggling with these "choices" or "heresies" the Church herself underwent gigantic transformations in organization and in the conception of what her message was and is.

The earliest of these heresies were those of the Gnostic group, the beginnings of which we have traced in Colossæ as early as the days of Paul. Its elements, as Bousset and Gunkel have shown, existed already in pre-Christian Judaism, where Judaism had been exposed to Persian and other Oriental influences. How Gnosticism had shaped

the Christian message in the Epistles of Paul's Roman captivity and in the Johannine writings has been shown in the last two chapters, but the influence of Gnosticism by no means ended there.

Gnostic opinions were hydra-headed, and Gnostic sects as numerous and variable as those of modern Protestantism. The significant ideas of Gnosticism came from Persia. Gnostics, like Zoroastrians, believed that there were two gods—a god of good and a god of evil. These gods were not superior one to the other, but divided the universe between them, struggling with one another for the possession of debatable portions. The evil god had made the world. Matter was accordingly intrinsically corrupt. The soul was a spark from the god of good, so that Redemption was a process of delivering the pure soul from corrupt matter. The pure god did not come into contact with the impure world himself, but through a series of agencies, each a little less pure than himself. To these agencies, or æons, high-sounding names were given, such as Logos, Aeon, Bathmos, Pleuramos, Sophia, Gnosis, etc. Redemption was with the Gnostics accomplished by knowledge, not by faith. The belief that matter was impure led some of them, like the Docetists, to

deny the reality of the Incarnation, as we saw in the last chapter; it led some to asceticism, and some to libertinism.

It was in her struggles with Gnosticism that the Church developed her form of government by bishops, selected and defined her canon of New Testament Scripture, and formulated her creeds. Indeed, she did more than formulate creeds; she lost in this struggle the conception that faith is an attitude of soul toward God, and thought of it more and more as a body of doctrine expressed in a form of words. Faith thus was conceived not as the outgoing of the soul in response to God's call, but as a body of doctrine external to the believer, to be accepted by him. Thus the test question came to be: "What *think* ye of Christ?" rather than: "What have you experienced of Christ?"

This change began even before the close of the New Testament. In the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, which are now pretty clearly proved to be for the most part from a later writer than Paul, we find two elements of this change in process. The Church is in these Epistles no longer the mystic body of Christ (as in Rom. xii. and 1 Cor. xii.), but it is an external organization, which must be kept in worthy

form. The officers of this organization have assumed great importance, and much space is devoted to detailing the qualifications of bishops and deacons. More significant than this is, however, the lapse which these Epistles reveal from the Pauline conception of faith. In Paul, faith is a kind of sanctified and transfigured love; here it is an objective body of doctrine—such as was later called a “deposit”—which has been received from the first teachers of Christianity, and which must be kept intact and handed on (see 1 Tim. iv. 1, 6, 16; v. 8; 2 Tim. i. 13; iii. 14; iv. 7).

Some twenty years later (about 112-115 A.D.) we find both of these tendencies heightened in the Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch, who sought to correct the errors of the Docetists in Asia Minor, against whom the First Epistle of John had been directed. In order that it might be clear to any puzzled soul where the Church is and what it is, Ignatius exalts the Bishop. In a lesser degree he exalts the other officers—Presbyters and Deacons—but the bishops most of all. In his Epistle to the Ephesians, he says men are joined to the bishop as to Jesus Christ. Men must be careful not to set themselves against the bishop lest they set them-



selves against God (Ephesians iv. 5 and 6). Similarly in his letter to the Philippians iii. and iv. he says: "As many as are of God and Jesus Christ are also with the bishop. There is but one Eucharist and that is at the altar where the bishop is."

Thus was set the pattern of Church organization which was destined to prevail for centuries. The emphasis laid by Ignatius on the episcopate was somewhat in advance of his time, but, as the centuries passed, it was everywhere accepted. The conflict with Gnosticism had given the Church her government.

In asserting against the Docetists the reality of the facts of Christ's life, Ignatius almost anticipates the words of that Creed which was afterwards called by the name of the Apostles. Thus in his Epistle to the Trallians (chap. ix.) he says: "Stop your ears, therefore, when any one speaks to you at variance with Jesus Christ, who was descended from David and was also of Mary: who also was truly born and did eat and drink. He was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate; he was truly crucified and truly died in the sight of beings in heaven and on earth and under the earth; he also was truly raised from the dead, his Father quickening him,

even as after the same manner his Father will so raise us up who believe in him by Jesus Christ, apart from whom we do not have real life."

Thus in the writings of Ignatius years before the formation of any of the creeds which have survived, we see a Christian in repelling Gnosticism instinctively resorting to such assertions as shaped the creeds.

A few years later we can trace the same tendency in Rome. Marcion, whose conception of God was closely akin to the Gnostic, had about 140 A.D. set up a congregation of his own in Rome, and, to make sure that none of her members were infected with his notions, the Roman congregation adopted by the middle of the second century a form of baptismal confession, which she required of her members. It ran as follows:—"I believe in God the Father Almighty and in Christ Jesus his son, who was born of Mary the Virgin, was crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried, on the third day he arose from the dead, ascended into Heaven, sitteth on the right hand of the Father, from whence he cometh to judge quick and dead; in the Holy Spirit, and resurrection of the flesh."

By about 400 A.D. this confession had been elab-

orated into that which we know as the Apostles Creed, and the legend that each of the Apostles had contributed a sentence to it had been born.

Again, the Gnostics, Basilides, and Valentinus, were the first to appeal to Apostolic writings in support of their views, and Marcion about 140 A.D. actually formed a New Testament canon, taking the Gospel of Luke and revising it as the one gospel of his canon, and admitting ten Epistles of Paul. The Epistles to Timothy and Titus he, like modern scholars, regarded as un-Pauline. It thus became necessary for the Church to define her canon, and by about 170 A.D. we find an authoritative list of New Testament books. It thus happened that at the close of the second century the Church emerged from her first fierce conflict with the seething thought of the world, equipped with an episcopal government, a confession of faith, and a well-defined list of authoritative books—all of which this conflict had given her.

Of these three results the second is the most important, for when faith was conceived as more a form of sound words than as an attitude of soul to God, or a spiritual experience to be expressed in a life, a long step had been taken away from genuine

Christianity, and a long step toward those religious quarrels, heresy trials and wars, which have been the curse of Christian history.

The immediate effect of the adoption of this form of confession—an effect which has gone on with increasing momentum as the centuries have passed—was to accomplish the excommunication and the anathematizing of all who differed.

Undoubtedly the easy way to deal with heretics is to put them up against the yard-stick of a creed and if their measurements are not right to “deliver them over to Satan.” Fortunately for Christianity in the East, faith in truth and in the power of truth did not immediately die. There were those who for a time overcame error, not by condemnation but by teaching truth more fully.

Such in some measure was Justin Martyr, who had been a philosopher before he had become a Christian. Such in larger measure were Pantænus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. The last three were successively the heads of a school in Alexandria, at the end of the second and beginning of the third centuries, and gave for a time to the Christianity of that city a breadth of outlook and a beauty of spirit which are to this day unique.

The most attractive thinker among these—a man whose great soul was a worthy successor to Paul and the author of the Fourth Gospel—was Clement of Alexandria. Clement believed not in a God who dwells in some remote corner of His universe, but in a God who is present in His world. Language seems poor and inadequate as Clement seeks to assert and illustrate the workings of the immanent God. Because deity indwells in humanity Clement saw no distinction between revelation and the highest products of the human reason. What God reveals and man discovers, is all one. Greek philosophy was as much a divine revelation as Hebrew prophecy. Man was made in the image of God. When that image was defaced by sin, God sent Christ, the incarnate Logos, to reveal again and perfectly the divine image. Christ, not Adam, was to Clement the normal man. The history of man's redemption became to Clement the education of the human race under the instruction of the indwelling deity. As the Logos he had always been leading men—the essential Christ had always been among them. The redemptive work of Christ was to Clement the revelation of the normal relation to God in its perfect manifestation, rather than the

restoration of a broken relationship long ago lost. This revelation was in Clement's view accomplished by the incarnation rather than by the death of the Saviour. Faith to Clement was the inward response of a soul constituted for the truth; it is the spiritual vision by which spiritual things are discerned. It corresponds in the realm of the spirit to the eye by which things in the material realm are perceived.

Holding such views as these, Clement did not treat the heretics as did others. Surrounded as he was by the worst of heresies, he boldly urges upon the heretics a deeper study of the truth as the one remedy for false opinions.

The ideal attitude of Clement was, however, too noble, too intellectual, too spiritual for most of the world. The trend of the age was toward a faith expressed in definite formulæ, and toward the proscription of any who could not accept the orthodox *shibboleth*. The spirit of Clement lingered on, nevertheless, and manifested itself in lesser measure in a few choice souls, one of whom was Athanasius, who lived a century later.

By the beginning of the fourth century Gnosticism had practically spent its force, so far as the Church was concerned. The three measures of

organization which the Church had taken in self-defence—the episcopal government, the well-defined New Testament canon, and, above all, the efficient weapon of a definite confession of faith—had excluded the Gnostics. It often happens, however, that those who reject an idea are profoundly affected by it; and this was the case with Christianity. The Church had energetically repudiated the conception that there were two gods, one good and the other evil, and that the world was made by the evil god; but she had nevertheless widely accepted the corollary of that belief, viz. that matter is inherently sinful, and that he who would deliver his soul in purity from the present evil world of matter must withdraw from the ordinary occupations of life. Undoubtedly, one influence which helped to render this view attractive was the social corruption which the cults of Astarte and Aphrodite had caused to permeate the social fabric of the ancient world.

Thus, about 200 A.D., men began, especially in Egypt, to withdraw from ordinary active life and to flee to the desert. They did it at first, it is true, sometimes to escape personal danger, but the idea that marriage was an occasion to the flesh, and that he was holier who was free from the entanglements



of this life, appears to have influenced many during the century before the time of Constantine. The full development of this movement as monasticism did not occur, however, till a later period, and was hastened by other influences, though it began as an illogical acceptance by the orthodox of Gnostic principles.

Then came, early in the fourth century, the recognition of the Christian Church by Constantine. This shrewd statesman saw in the Church an organization which permeated his empire. Whatever truth there may be in the legend that he saw in a vision a cross in the sky inscribed with the words, "By this sign conquer," it is clear that he saw in the Church an instrument of which he hoped to make powerful political capital. It is no wonder that short-sighted human beings who had recently been persecuted to the death should have been wild with joy when Christianity became the legitimate religion of the empire, but we who look back upon the event and perceive the secularization and degradation of Christianity which followed feel more like weeping than rejoicing.

It was not many years before some, even in the Church of that day, entertained similar feelings.

Many not only did not feel at home in a secularized Church, but they had so long suffered persecution that they could not believe that they were really Christians when they were free from torture, hence they withdrew from the cities, especially in Egypt, and largely swelled the ranks of the ascetics out of which the monks were afterwards organized, inflicting upon themselves in the scorching deserts, through hunger and thirst, the tortures which a Christian Government refused to inflict upon them. No doubt they found in these painful exercises a grim comfort, and possibly a deep joy, but by their withdrawal from the activities of the world they declared that for them Christianity had no message for the common, laborious, and domestic life of man.

In any sketch of the Christian message in the Eastern Church, considerable space must be given to its tendency to form creeds. We have already traced the beginnings of the so-called Apostles Creed. That beginning served as a basis for all future definitions of doctrine. Gnosticism, which was largely Oriental in its kinship, had called that Roman formula into existence, and it had been constructed in days when most Christians were unspeculative and were satisfied with assertions in the

language of Scripture. It had, however, laid the stress on what the Christian *thinks* of Christ, and as time rolled on and learning increased, the Greek speculative and dogmatic habit prevailed, so that what one thought about some of the more difficult matters connected with Christ became of prime importance. Antioch, like Alexandria, was a centre of learning. At Antioch they emphasized the aloofness of God from the world; at Alexandria His nearness. At Antioch they taught that Christ was not begotten of God, but created by Him; that He is not of the same substance as God, but of like substance. Arius, about 318 A.D., went from Antioch to Alexandria with such teaching and was deposed from his functions as a Christian deacon. Immediately all the East was aflame. A traveller relates that the discussions of this matter took such hold of the popular heart that, if one asked a boatman the fare across a river, he would answer with assertions of the created or uncreated character of the Son. All this occurred just at the beginning of the fourth century. It happened, therefore, that at the moment when Constantine hoped to make the Church an instrument to cement his dominions together he found her rent with dissension. Like a

practical statesman he called a council of all the bishops in his dominions to settle the controversy. This council assembled in 325 A.D., at Nicea, in Asia, not far from Constantinople. Thus the first great Œcumenical Council was called into being. After long deliberation this council issued an elaborated confession of faith known as the Nicene Creed. This creed differs from the earlier creed chiefly in its fuller definition of the Person of Christ. As against Arianism Christ was declared to be "begotten of the Father, the only begotten that is of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, who for us men was incarnate and made man."

In the Nicene definition of Christ, which finally prevailed in consequence of the labours and ability of Athanasius, Clement's principle that God had actually revealed in Christ His presence in the world triumphed. This was the meaning of the phrase "of one substance with the Father." It was, however, in a way, a sad triumph, for it was now only a principle involved in a creed, to be accepted as having once taken place, rather than a warm

experience of God's presence induced by the fact of Christ's incarnation.

Although the Nicene Fathers condemned to perdition in vigorous language all who did not believe this creed, the controversy raged hotly for the next fifty years. Nearly half of the empire was Arian, and about half of the time during that century an Arian emperor occupied the throne. The bitter struggle of these years enhanced in men's minds the necessity of orthodox belief, and called their attention further and further away from living experience.

Finally, in the year 381, Theodosius I. (the Great) called another council—the First Council of Constantinople—which reaffirmed the Nicene definition of Christ's nature, and defined the source and functions of the Holy Spirit, declaring that He proceeded from the Father.

At last Arianism spent itself, and the orthodox view prevailed. The Nicene Creed had asserted both the human and divine natures of Christ, and Christian speculation which, alas! usually means Christian controversy, next turned its attention to the relation of these natures to each other. This gave rise to what is called the Monophysite (*i.e.* the

one-nature) controversy. To some the divine nature seemed the more important, and in their eyes it eclipsed the other. These called Mary the Mother of God. Others, of whom the name of Nestorius is best known, denounced this phrase and proposed the term "Mother of Christ." A council called to determine this matter met at Ephesus in the year 431, but the pearl of Christian charity had so dissolved in the acid of doctrine that the dissenting Fathers first fell violently foul of one another, then split into two councils, each of which anathematized the other.

The Council of Chalcedon, called in 451 to settle the matter, endeavored to define the indefinable by declaring that Christ possessed both a human and a divine nature, which are not converted the one into the other, and are not confused the one with the other; and that in spite of this duality of nature Christ's person is a unity. Like many a Christian since, they held that the human and divine are distinct and incompatible. They felt sure, too, that they could define the limits of the two, and so fell into contradictions.

Naturally, this decree was never accepted by the Monophysite or the Nestorian Churches. This

creed, instead of uniting, for ever divided the Church. The Armenians, most of the Syrians, the Egyptians, and the Abyssinians, never accepted it, and were thus for ever separated from the rest of the Church. These Christians, widely separated in territory and divided by language, have developed differently. Their Churches, like that of England, have each a national colouring and an independent development.

After this separation the Greek Church, as that of the Byzantine Empire is called, continued her natural course. At a second Council of Constantinople, in 553, the teachings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the real thinker of the two-nature party, were condemned, and at a third Council of Constantinople, in 680, the logical consequences of the Council of Chalcedon, which had asserted that Christ had two natures, were accepted, and it was asserted that He possessed two wills, one human and one divine. Finally, a second Council of Nicea, in 787, sanctioned images or pictures in the churches.

Hand in hand with the movement which brought the use of images into the churches had come the belief in the efficacy of the invocation of saints. In



all parts of Christendom heathen deities, baptized as Christian saints, continued to be invoked. As in western Europe one finds many a Teutonic deity wearing the cloak of a saint, so in Palestine and Syria many a Semitic Baal turns up as St. George or some other saint. At the same spot these old Baals are often worshipped by Mohammedans as *welis* or intercessors. So all over Christendom old ideas continued under Christian names.

In the history of creed-making we see the tendency to lay stress on opinion rather than on life and character, which began in the early controversy with the Gnostics, carried to its logical issue. As the centuries passed, the emphasis on correctness of belief increased, and was accompanied by a corresponding emphasis on correctness of ritual. As the estimate of these things increased, the consciousness of the presence of God as a living Being, speaking to His Church now, was lost. The Eastern Christians believe in the divine nature of Christ. They accept the inspiration of the holy apostles; they even believe that God inspired the Fathers of Nicea, and the Greeks, those of Chalcedon; but that He can inspire now, they do not believe. Men, if they would be saved, must accept the old dogmas,

and worship in the ways prescribed by the old ritual. The living Voice which once spoke is silent, and to depart from the commands it once gave is death.

One may ask how it has been possible for a Church that produced a Clement and an Athanasius to become so dead. It must be remembered that even in the best of communities it is easy to hoard our faith

“In mouldy parchments, while our tender spirits flee  
The rude grasp of that great impulse”

which drove our ancestors to heroic deeds and to sublime experience. The hardest of all things to perpetuate is a living experience of God. This is doubly true of a community whose civilization is steadily declining, as was the case with the Eastern Empire. By the fourth century the creative vitality of the Roman genius was already spent, and although the Eastern Empire survived the shock of the barbarian hordes in the fifth century under which the Western Empire went down, its creative genius did not survive. It is true that in the sixth century the age of Justinian was outwardly a flourishing period, but it was not a creative one, and in the next century Mohammedanism swept over the territories of most of the Monophysite Churches, and robbed

even the Greek Church of all her Syrian territory. For a time the Arab, eager for knowledge, outstripped the citizens of the Eastern Empire in learning and civilization, but this creative period, depressing to the Christians while it lasted, soon waned, and left this section of the Church exposed to the barbarous bigotry of unenlightened Islam. The Eastern Empire held out against Mohammedanism until 1453, but during all these centuries it had only vitality enough to resist disintegration. Spiritually it was living on the heritage of the past. No new spiritual impulse was felt. Ignorance settled down over priesthood and people. Superstition degraded faith. As in the West, the theory of Transubstantiation, *i.e.*, the theory that the bread and wine are actually turned into the body and blood of Christ, was accepted. The ceremonies of the Church were thought to be efficacious by a kind of higher magic, and Christianity gradually became only less unintelligent than Mohammedanism. One sees the effect of all this today in that seething hot-bed of zeal which is not according to knowledge—the modern Jerusalem—where Greek Christians, Armenian, Coptic (Egyptian), Abyssinian, and Syrian Christians, together with eighteen orders of

Roman Catholics not altogether friendly to one another, as well as many cranky Protestants, form with Jews and Mohammedans the most religious mass of unregenerate people on the face of the earth. Religion as ceremony and ritual, as tithing mint, anise, and cummin, as visiting and kissing places where the feet of men in whom the Holy Spirit really dwelt, once trod, flourishes with all that vigour which competition begets. In no place in the world are knees more often bent, or prayers more often repeated; but probably in no place in the world is there less of that broad Christian charity and gentle goodness which we instinctively associate with the name of Christ. In its place one finds a hatred fostered by ecclesiastical rivalry which not infrequently results in fighting and sometimes in murder.

I do not mean to say that there have not been many pure and holy lives in all these churches throughout the centuries; nor would I imply that there are not many such in them now, even in Jerusalem. In all Christian history there has been, as David Scull puts it,<sup>1</sup> an experience of the nearness of God in the soul, together with a belief in the far-

<sup>1</sup> *Union with God*, pp. 28, 99.

offness of God in the mind. This experience has kept the Christian life real. The modern Russian peasant is an example of this. I do not mean, accordingly, to imply that even in Abyssinia the people are not the better for having the form of Christianity which prevails there than they would be without any; but I do mean to say that the Eastern Church as a whole is a sad object-lesson as to what any Christianity will become which loses faith in the continual presence of the living voice of God, or that makes the mistake of laying more stress on orthodoxy of opinion than upon actual Christian experience and a Christlike life. The Eastern Church is but the fossil of a once living giant. Its passion of experience has passed; it has cooled into mere formalism. Its face is set toward the past, and the hand of that past rests upon it. It makes no provision, as even the Roman Church does, for hearing the voice of God in the present. Consequently the fires have gone out; only here and there a few embers are smouldering. As one walks its aisles he treads as about the crater of an extinct volcano. He remembers the fires which burned in such souls as those of Ignatius, the Montanists—Clement, Origen, Athanasius, the Gregories, Basil,

and Chrysostom—indeed, the lava which once came hot from such fires he sees cooled and hardened into the rock of ancient custom all about him. Its theology receives no enlargement from present experience.

Or to change the figure, the Eastern Church is like some Oriental rivers, which spring glorious and free from a mountain spring and flow out into the desert, receiving no tributaries except near the source. These rivers soon become turbid as they flow through the sands; they grow smaller and smaller as their waters are absorbed by the thirsty soil until they disappear altogether. Any Christianity that is to be kept alive must receive new accessions of the Water of Life from the Heavenly Source with each passing year; its fields must be continually fructified from above. It must live in constant realization of the promise: "Lo, I am with you always," or it may soon be said of it: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, but art dead."

## CHAPTER V

### THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE IN THE WESTERN CHURCH

THE conflict with heresy, especially with Gnostic heresy, which, as noted above, produced such important effects upon the Eastern Church, affected the Western Church in like manner. During the centuries before the Council of Chalcedon, the two sections of Christendom waged the war against heresy as a united army, and were not conscious of fundamental separation. Indeed, at Chalcedon, in 451, the Roman Pope or Bishop exerted a paramount influence in the wording of the decree of the Council.

Notwithstanding this external unity there were, even in the early days, fundamental differences of tendency in the two sections which ultimately transformed the churches of these respective parts of the world into separate organizations, whose aims and ideals were not in all respects identical. The East was given more to speculation, the West to organization. In the East conformity to abstract princi-



ples possessed for all minds a great charm; in the West the paramount interest was in practical administration. Indeed, such practical administration as the Eastern Church exhibited in dealing with the Gnostics she appeared to have obtained, in impulse at least, from the West, for it was at Rome that the earliest confession of faith which we can trace was adopted. This was the formula which afterwards developed into the Apostles' Creed, and which, as we noted in the last chapter, was the beginning of this administrative method of dealing with heresy, and was the basis upon which the creeds of the councils were erected.

The writer who first formulated the ideas which were destined to prevail in the West was Irenæus (d. 202). Unlike Clement of Alexandria, his contemporary, Irenæus had no use for philosophy. He saw no divine revelation except that recorded in the Scriptures.

The thought which Irenæus made fundamental was the doctrine of the "deposit," or the doctrine of "Tradition" (*cf.* Her. iii. 3). In substance the doctrine is this: Christ delivered to His Apostles certain doctrines; they in turn delivered them to the bishops of the churches which they founded; these

bishops have in turn delivered them to their successors down to the present time. In the great churches of the principal cities of the Empire, where the succession from the Apostles has been continuous, and where any deviation from the primitive standard would, on account of the prominent position of the Church, be more quickly observed than in an obscure out-of-the-way congregation, the genuine form of Christianity may be found. This line of reasoning, Irenæus urged, made it clear that the normative form of Christianity would be found in the church at Rome, for that church had been founded by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul, and as Rome was the capital of the world, Christians from all parts of the world often met there, and any deviation from the correct standard would be more readily detected and corrected there than elsewhere. Other churches are, then, in possession of the true faith in so far as they are in agreement with the Church of Rome. This doctrine of Irenæus was epoch-making; it swayed the whole future.

In reality it was simply a development by a practical administrator of the doctrine which we previously noted in the Epistles to Timothy, that

the "faith is to be kept," and that which has been "received" is to be "committed to faithful men." Thinking, as Irenæus did, that these epistles were from St. Paul, he had good precedent for his doctrine of tradition.

The theological defence of this doctrine of tradition should have been the belief that God is remote from the world; that Christ, Who has ascended to Him, is also now far away; and that the only authoritative voice which can reach the Christian is the distant echo, through tradition, of the voice of the once present Christ. But, strange to say, Irenæus did not hold this view of God. He is on this point in general harmony with Clement of Alexandria, and when he is called upon to give a reason for the Incarnation, he declared it to be "that we might become gods"—an answer that would place him in the front rank of the mystics. The successors of Irenæus in the West were constitutionally predisposed to be inoculated with the germ of his doctrine of tradition, while to the germ of his mystical thought they were immune.

Tertullian (d. 230) of Carthage, a younger contemporary of Irenæus, in his book, *The Prescription*

of *Heresy*, elaborated and made more forcible Irenæus's doctrine of tradition. Tertullian was a lawyer of eminence, and treats the matter as a problem of law.

The Apostles, he claimed, handed on what Christ taught, keeping back nothing. They delivered the entire "deposit" to their successors. Heretics could not claim, therefore, that there had come to them any part of the Apostolic "deposit" which had not come to the orthodox bishop. This "deposit" of doctrine is the Church's property. Her title to it is secure because of the Apostolic deed of gift, and because of long possession. The heretics are trespassers on the Church's domain. They have no right there. Heresy is self-will instigated by philosophy. Athens, declared Tertullian, had nothing to do with Jerusalem, the Academy with the Church, or heretics with Christians. These trespassers the Church has a right to eject.

Later in life Tertullian, in spite of his argument, became a heretic himself. When the Montanists were struggling against an official ministry for the old liberty of "prophesying," he sided with the Montanists. He had in this book, however, spoken so in accord with the genius of the Western Church,

that, although that Church repudiated the author, she continued to regard his book as one of the great buttresses of her charter.

The next great statesman of the Western Church was Cyprian (d. 258). Cyprian lived through the Decian persecution of the years 250-251. That persecution was the fiercest through which the Church had ever passed. The Emperor set himself to stamp out Christianity throughout his dominions, and compelled all his subjects—or at least any who were suspected of being Christians—to prove that they were not by going before a magistrate and securing a certificate that the magistrate had seen them offer incense to the statue of the emperor. In many districts martyrdom was the alternative. While many Christians suffered martyrdom, many offered the incense and secured the certificates. Decius, in 251, fell in a battle with the Goths, and his successor did not continue the persecution. Afterwards hosts of the “lapsed,” as those who had obtained the certificates were called, wished to come back into the Church, and great was the difference of opinion as to whether they should be received. Cyprian had himself withdrawn from Carthage and gone into hiding during the persecution, and was severely

criticised by some of his presbyters for so doing.

The differences between Cyprian and his congregation and elders over these matters led him to entertain in the end some views of the Christian ministry which were as much in accord with the genius of Latin Christianity as Irenæus's doctrine of the "deposit" had been, and these views ultimately transformed the Christian ministry into a priesthood. Cyprian's views, as they finally took shape were, briefly, as follows:—

"The bishop is the representative of Christ in the community over which he rules. He has accordingly, over that single congregation, the authority which Christ possesses over the Church Universal. He is the viceroy over that portion of God's heritage. But Christ holds this position of authority because He represents His people in the presence of God; because He is their high priest; because He has offered for them His own body and blood. The bishop, therefore, as the representative of Christ, is the priest of God, who in the Eucharist offers to God the Lord's passion, and truly discharges the office of Christ . . . Above all, the bishop is the representative of Christ because he is the judge to whom belongs the power of punishing or remitting sins . . . They only who are set over the Church . . . can remit sins."

So declared Cyprian. Of course this doctrine was not accepted by all the Church during Cyprian's lifetime, but in the course of a century or two it became the conception of the Church at large, and

transformed the simple Christian ministry into a veritable priesthood.<sup>1</sup>

The greatest organizer of the system of thought in the Western Church was, however, Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, in North Africa (d. 430 A.D.). We cannot stop to review Augustine's interesting biography. His Christian mother, his youth captivated by sensually immoral pleasure and varied by the trial of many philosophies, his failure as a teacher of rhetoric in Rome, and his most successful career at Milan, and conversion under the preaching of Ambrose, are all known. In character and thought Augustine exerts upon a modern man the most opposite influences. His *Confessions* are a unique and attractive picture of himself, in spite of their theological bias; they reveal piety of unusual genuineness, devotion of unalloyed excellence, and a mysticism which links us to him in heart. On the other hand, his final system of thought is the Magna Charta of Catholicism, and is all that a modern Protestant abhors.

This system of thought was developed during Augustine's struggles with three heresies—

<sup>1</sup> See, for more details, Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Christian Centuries*, pp. 290-319.



the Manichæans, the Donatists, and the Pelagians.

Manichæism was founded by a Persian named Mani, who was born a little more than a hundred years before Augustine, and taught at Babylon. Mani endeavoured to found a new creed which should combine the best in the religious systems with which he was acquainted. He adopted the Zoroastrian conception of two gods, the Hindoo belief in the transmigration of souls, the Jewish belief in angels and demons, and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. His religion spread as far east as China, and west to the Roman Empire. Augustine before his conversion had at one time been a Manichæan, and in some important respects never shook off its doctrines. Clearly Manichæism contained elements which were not in primitive Christianity. It denied that the Church was the sole depository of the truth.

In opposition to the Manichæans Augustine revived and extended Irenæus's doctrine of tradition. Truth is a deposit entrusted to the Episcopate—so Augustine argued. It is found only in the Church. To the sanction of the Church even Scripture owes its authority. The Church for which Augustine claimed so much was not the consentient

reason of those who are enlightened by the Divine Teacher speaking within their souls; it was the institution of which the Episcopate holds the charter. This institution was entrusted by a power external to itself with a "deposit" which was the only authoritative source of truth. The "notes" or signs by which this Church may be known are, as Augustine pictured it to the Manichæans, its power, its splendour, its miraculous gifts, its vast extent, and its long succession of bishops extending from the See of Peter.

This idea of the Church is further developed in his controversy with the Donatists. The Donatists as a party had emerged in the controversy over the "lapsed," and took their name from a bishop of Carthage. They held that the Church consisted only of those known or believed to be faithful. As the Church at large received again into its fold those of the "lapsed" who were penitent, the Donatists separated themselves from the rest and claimed that they were the only true Church. Augustine found many of them in his diocese, and they were naturally obnoxious to him as the practical administrator of a See.

In opposition to these Augustine asserted that the

Church by its very nature must include the unfaithful and the wicked—that the tares must grow with the wheat. The Church was God's instrument for ruling the world, and it was the divine will that all should come into it; if they would not come of themselves, they must be forced to come; if the Church had not the power to do this, then the State should come to her aid.

There underlay this position the thought that God is far from His world, and that He is, through the Church, as a vicegerent, ruling the world as a distant province of His dominions. Augustine had accepted, too, the dictum of Cyprian, that he who had not the Church for his mother could not have God for his Father, but he had modified it, for, according to Augustine, not every one who has the Church for his mother has God for his Father. Final salvation is in the hands of God, and can be known only at the last day. Even of those within the Church only the elect will then be saved.

Before the Donatist controversy was ended, Pelagius, a monk born in Britain, then the extreme west of the civilized world, went to Africa, and Augustine had the Pelagian controversy on his hands. Pelagius denied that all men had sinned in Adam; de-

clared that Adam's sin affected Adam alone; that children came into the world in the same condition that Adam was before his fall; that unbaptized children were saved; and that the human will had power to turn away from evil and follow righteousness, or, if necessary, God would grant His especial aid to its assistance. Such views robbed a church such as Augustine had come to believe in of all excuse for existence.

It was this teaching that called forth Augustine's doctrine of Original Sin. Not that this doctrine was entertained by him now for the first time, but it was now heightened and given vehement expression. According to this dogma humanity is absolutely separated from God by Adam's sin. The whole human race was implicated in that sin, has in consequence fallen under the wrath of God, and is destined to endless woe. Humanity has not been redeemed by Christ, only the elect have been redeemed. Sin utterly destroyed the divine image in man; only a creative act of grace can renew it. This creative act takes place in the elect at the time of baptism, and by it the divine image is restored. Without baptism man is only a highly gifted animal. This doctrine of baptismal regeneration was an inno-

vation, and though it ultimately prevailed because so much in harmony with the genius of Latin Christianity, it found in some quarters strenuous opponents.

In Augustine's view Christ had come to the world to establish the Church, and by His death had redeemed the elect. He had now gone to the distant heaven where God dwelt, and had left His work to the Church. Humanity must be swept into that Church, or it had no hope. Within the Church an impalpable substance called "grace" gave repentance and brought salvation to the elect. The rest of humanity was given over to a future punishment, which, in Augustine's view, was more horrible, if possible, than that conceived by Mohammed.<sup>1</sup>

In Augustine the Christian message in the Western Church received the form which it was to hold for a thousand years, and which it holds in much of Christendom till the present day.

After Augustine there settled over the Western world an increasing cloud of ignorance. Hordes of barbarians overran the land, sweeping before them what little culture there was. At the Council of

<sup>1</sup>For greater detail, see Allen, *Continuity of Christian Thought*, pp. 143-172.

Toledo, in Spain, in 587, the creed of the First Council of Constantinople was modified, so as to declare that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Son as well as from the Father. The Church held her charter from the Son, and thus all gifts of the Spirit were brought under the Church's control. The Greek Church never accepted this addition.

During these centuries, too, there developed the doctrine of Purgatory. Everybody held still the old notion that the dead passed the time till a general resurrection in the under-world, and gradually the idea grew up that that time might be made profitable for the purification of imperfect souls. The priests were quick to see that this could be turned to the advantage of the Church, and persuaded the people that the purifying tortures of this subterranean sojourn might be shortened by gifts to the Church. Thus the organization which Augustine had done so much to erect added to its domain the power of the world to come.

Another step in the realization of Augustine's idea of a Church was taken in the year 800, when Pope Leo III. placed the crown of a so-called Roman Empire on the head of Charlemagne, and thus asserted the superiority of the Church over the State.

As the ignorance of the age increased, Radbertus, a monk, proposed in the ninth century the doctrine of Transubstantiation, *i.e.*, that the bread and wine become when consecrated the actual body and blood of Christ. The alchemists of the period believed it possible to turn lead into gold, although they did not succeed in doing it, and it was accordingly easy to believe that bread and wine could be turned into flesh and blood. So this view was generally accepted after a short time, and completed Cyprian's theory that in the Eucharist the priest actually offered a sacrifice.

Even from this imperfect sketch it will be seen that from Irenæus onward the constant tendency had been to make the Christian message the charter of the Church as an institution, and to herald to men the fact that here only was salvation to be found. And yet until the approach of the year 1000 the Church failed to captivate the imagination of Western Christendom. Until then the European world was too prosperous to come under priestly sway. The Church was supported and tolerated, but the iron of her slavery had not entered into men's souls.

The ninth and tenth centuries changed all this.



There were fresh migrations of barbarians, which caused untold sufferings. The Huns appeared in renewed numbers and overran the Frankish country to the sea. The Northmen came down upon France and Spain, and sweeping through the Mediterranean, took possession of Italy. The Danes invaded and conquered England. The Saracens crossed from North Africa, conquered Sicily, and appeared before the gates of Rome. As the year 1000 approached millenarian theories prevailed. It was widely believed that the world would end with that year. The sufferings caused by the barbarians were thought to be the signs which portended the end. As the dread year approached, men deeded their property to the Church, thinking to gain some favour with God by giving Him those material things which they themselves must soon lose. An Italian scholar, a friend of mine, tells me that he has seen one of these original deeds of gift made at this time.

The year 1000 passed, and the world still went on, but it was a different, a more religious world. Its conscience had been awakened; it began to build those fascinatingly beautiful and solemn cathedrals which still delight and allure us.

When civilization, which the barbarians had for a time crushed, began once more to flourish, the awakened mind became an ally of the Church, and entered the service of religion. Its first task was to justify the dogmas of the Church to the reason. The first to enter this field was Anselm (1038-1109), an Italian by birth, who, late in life, became Archbishop of Canterbury.

Anselm set himself to explain the Incarnation in his epoch-making work, *Cur Deus Homo*, and in doing so gave Christendom for the first time a rational theory of the Atonement. For a thousand years the Church had got on without any theory. If any of the Fathers mentioned the subject (and some of them did), they had taken Christ's illustration of the ransom literally, and claimed that God delivered Christ to Satan in order to purchase the release of men whom Satan had captured. Anselm's theory was based on feudal law. Man was God's vassal. He owed God perfect fealty, which he had failed to pay. As God was infinite, the debt owed for this failure was infinite. Man could not pay it, for he was finite; only God could pay it. But man must pay it, for it was man, not God, who owed the fealty. If the debt were not paid, man

must eternally perish. God's justice demanded this. If he perished, God's love would be thwarted. Accordingly God became incarnate in Christ, so that the conditions of the problem could be satisfied. God and man thus both paid the debt, and God's love gave Christ as a sacrifice to God's justice. Thus the doctrine of the Atonement as a great legal or governmental problem was brought into the Christian message, and, whether, as in the theory of Calvin, it has been thought that Christ actually bore our punishment rather than paid our debt, or, whether, as in the theory of Grotius, Christ was believed to bear just enough of God's wrath to deter other provinces of God's dominions from rebelling, the doctrine of the Atonement, rather than the Incarnation, has to the present hour been thought by the majority of the Christians of the West to be the heart of the Christian message.

Anselm, however, did not array this doctrine against Augustine's doctrine of the Church, for he taught that the whole matter had been turned over to the Church to administer. He had spoken, too, of the Atonement as having infinite value, and as being more than an equivalent for the sins of mankind. This surplus merit the Church in after days

believed had been turned over to her to administer, and it was made the basis of the sale of Indulgences.

Although the work of Anselm strengthened the Church, it did not make its position intellectually secure, as the career and work of Abelard soon showed. This task of completing the subjugation of the mind of man to the Church was left to Thomas Aquinas (1227-1274). For some three centuries, from the time of John Scotus Erigena, the learned Irish monk, who knew Greek, and who made known to the West something of the Platonic thought as contained in the works of the pseudo-Dionysius, the Schoolmen had had some conception of Platonic ideas. They had, however, been ignorant of Aristotle until just before the time of Aquinas. Ibn Roshd (Averroes), an Arab philosopher of Spain, had translated the works of the great Greek into Arabic, and Alexander of Hales and Albertus Magnus had turned them from Arabic into Latin.

With a true instinct for practical utility, Aquinas made Aristotle a kind of pope in the scientific world, and floated his famous theory of a kingdom of nature and a kingdom of grace. The theory was really original with Albertus Magnus, the teacher of Aquinas, but it was Aquinas who gave it its

importance to the religious world. Interrogating nature through the eyes of Aristotle, these Schoolmen conceived nature to be a sort of hierarchy, rising in regular gradation from the lowest orders of life till it reached its culmination in man. Above this kingdom, and rising on it as the spirit depends on the body, towered the kingdom of grace, of which the Church was the external embodiment. The Church arose as a hierarchy through the various orders of clergy to the Pope, the Vicar of God on earth, and was continued by the angels and archangels, finding its culmination in the throne of God. These two kingdoms were believed everywhere to be distinct from one another. The lower does not pass over into the higher; it is separated from it as though its outer vestibule. The only door opening from one to the other is the Sacrament of Baptism, by which one who has natural life receives a supernatural gift. These two kingdoms were thought to correspond to the Empire and the Church. There was a natural theology, consisting of such religious truths as could be inferred from nature, and there was a revealed theology which the natural man could never have found out without divine aid. The latter was not contrary to reason, but simply above

it. This theory, leaving open as it did a field for the human mind to legitimately work in, and claiming that what was beyond was likewise justified in the perfect reason of God, gave the Church her intellectual fortress, and the work of Aquinas is the approved philosophy of the Roman Church to the present hour.

Rapidly and imperfectly we have now traced the main outline of the form which the Christian message took in the West. We have seen how the practical workings of the Western mind with the genius for organization inherited from those old Romans who built the empire, constructed the Church, making it a strong organization. This organization, inheriting the task of the empire, should, they thought, still rule the world from the banks of the Tiber. This was not done all at once, but the drift was altogether that way, even from the start, although those who took the early steps probably had no vision of the goal towards which they were tending. Notwithstanding this, the progress was steadily in this direction. We have only touched upon a few of the mountain-peaks of that great range of Fathers who form the watershed of this great area, but we have seen that Irenæus,

Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Radbertus, Leo III., Anselm, and Aquinas, all belong to the same great range, and to these, had time permitted, many others might have been added.

The substance of the Christian message as it prevailed in the West was, then, this: Adam had by sin utterly lost all connection with God his Creator. All his descendants are held by God morally responsible for Adam's sin, and are doomed to the most hopeless torment. In order that a few who are elect, and are known only to God, might be saved, God sent His Son into the world to die. After Christ's death He went back to the distant God from whence He came. Before He went away He organized the Church and made her head, the bishop of Rome, His Vicar on the earth. To this Church is given the duty of ruling the world and of administering the salvation of the elect. No salvation can be had outside of her. She represents the kingdom of grace on the earth, which can be entered only through baptism. In other words, the Christian message in the Latin Church is: God is far away, but long ago He came into the world for a few years, organized the Church, gave her the administration of His Spirit and all things spiritual;

it is His will that all come into her. Such a message is better than no message, and it has been blest to many millions.

The Church in the West, through the supremacy of the Roman bishop and the conceptions of the right of Rome to rule, which were inherited from the empire, has been preserved from such complete crystallization as was suffered by the Church of the East. She has always maintained that God could still speak to some one, and the doctrine of Papal Infallibility, formulated within the memory of some of us, is an assertion of the right of the Pope to free himself from the fetters of the dead past in obedience to the living voice of the Spirit. The Eastern Church represents utterly immobile conservatism. Its whole gaze is turned towards the past. In contrast, the Roman Church has at least the possibility of one eye (however near-sighted and blinded by cataract that eye may be) open to the future; one heart open to the voice of the Spirit now.

The message of Western Christendom as outlined in the Church of the Middle Age has remained essentially unchanged as to its most important features, even in Protestantism. Protestantism, it



is true, asserted the right of private judgment, and so greatly modified the conception of the Church. Calvin, too, reversed the relative position of the Church and the Bible. According to Roman doctrine, the Church is God's infallible representative, and Scripture owes to the Church its sanction; according to Calvin—and it has been accepted by most Protestants—the Scriptures are God's infallible representative, and the Church owes to them her authority.

This is no doubt an important difference, but it is not so fundamental as it at first appears. Both systems presuppose that God is far removed from the world and from His people; that all authoritative communion with Him long ago ceased; that a standard of authority external to the conscience is necessary; and whether that standard is a book or an organization, however important within limits the question may be, is beside this more fundamental question a minor detail.

In Calvinism—and Calvinism has until within a comparatively few years ruled by far the larger portion of the Protestant world—the election of a few and the damnation of the many has been preached in true Augustinian fashion. In all of

Protestantism, almost to the present hour, the central theme of the Gospel message has been held to be a theory of the Atonement based on a legal scheme of debt, penalty, or government—a scheme which has drawn attention away from the unalloyed love of God, and His direct means and methods in Christ and by direct spiritual contact of reaching and moving the souls of His children. Probably, however, the Christian message in this form was best adapted to the majority, and certain it is that it has proved the power of God unto salvation.

In tracing, as I have done, the general trend of the Christian message in the West in this brief compass, it has been necessary to pass by many exceptions to this general trend. I have not had time to mention important organized protests against the prevailing theology—protests which were also assertions of the nearness of God and His willingness still to inspire the individual. I have said nothing of the Montanists in the second century, who, though they began in Phrygia, spread to North Africa, and who stoutly asserted that God still inspired them to prophesy as He did the prophets of old. I have said nothing of the Cathari and the sect of the Holy Spirit of the twelfth century, nor

of the German Mystics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Time has failed me to speak of St. Francis of Assisi, of Abelard, John Ruysbroek, of Tauler, of Eckhardt, of Jacob Boehme, of Huss and Wyckliffe, of Luther and of Zwingli, of Menno and Savonarola, of Arminius and of Schwenkfeld, who, denying in different ways parts of the prevailing theology, through their faith wrought righteousness, and some of them subdued kingdoms. Such as these are proof that in every generation there was, as George Fox would say, a righteous seed, or, to use the words of Paul, "God left not Himself without a witness."

Had we had time for all these exceptions, however, they would have served but to show that the history of the Western Church is not an arid prairie, but has many diversifying features. And, on the whole, the consideration of these features would not change our summary of the form of the Christian message in the Western Church. These preachers scarcely made themselves heard as compared with the great multitude who voiced as with a great shout the gospel of an absentee God, of an infallible organization, or of an infallible book as His representative, and an artificial scheme to bring

men into harmony with God. On the whole, this was the form the Christian message took in the West for a thousand years—the form, indeed, in which, over large areas, it is still proclaimed. And yet, as in the East, there was also in the West a sense in the feelings of the nearness of God at the very time that men held with their minds the theory of His far-offness. This, in spite of the prevailing theology, has kept Christianity alive, and enabled it to bear fruit.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE ACCORDING TO THE REFORMERS

THE causes which produced the Protestant Reformation were manifold, and numerous were the men who helped to give shape to the Christian message in Protestantism. Three among these stand out prominently. On account of their pioneer work and their commanding influence, he who would become familiar with the underlying principles of the Protestant Reformation must study especially the work of Martin Luther, Huldreich Zwingli, and John Calvin.

Luther, the pioneer of the movement, was a man of rich and commanding personality, but was possessed of no great power of systematic thought. Of peasant stock, Luther's attitude to the universe was thoroughly religious and practical. Although educated at the University of Erfurt, one of the centres of the new humanistic culture, he was singularly untouched by the currents of new thought.

Even the better side of the theology of the Catholic Church seems to have been unknown to him. At least, if he knew it, it did not control his thinking.

The peasantry of the time, like the peasantry of any age, conceived of religion in an objective and crass way. God was regarded as a terrible and an angry judge; the one thing needful in religion was to escape his wrath. With this desire Luther entered a monastery, but in the life of its secluded brotherhood he found no assurance that he had escaped the wrath of God. It was in this mood that he made his great discovery as he was studying Rom. 1:17, which reads in the Latin Vulgate "For the justice of God is revealed in him from faith unto faith." At first he hated the expression, feeling that, already damned on account of original sin and overwhelmed with calamities by the decrees of the decalogue, it was too much that God should further threaten man in his gospel. At last he perceived that the justice of God is that whereby the just man lives, even faith, and from that time the doctrine of justification by faith became the cardinal doctrine of his gospel.

Luther's doctrine of justification was shaped by his previous conception of God. He had been

actuated by a religious, not by a moral yearning. It was not so much to be like God, but to escape God's wrath—to be on good terms with Him—that had been the passion of Luther's soul. He conceived justification, accordingly, as a means of gaining God's favour rather than a means of becoming godlike. Luther pretended to have no merit of his own; God averted his wrath by attributing to the faithful penitent Christ's righteousness. In Luther's view, then, salvation consists, not in moral transformation, but in escaping God's wrath. To believe that one could obtain this reconciliation with God by a personal experience, in which the soul comes directly to God by faith, pleading the merits of Christ, without any of the penances established by the church and without priestly intervention, was a bold step forward. It signified an important break in thought with the established methods of the Roman hierarchy. When, therefore, Tetzel later came into Germany selling indulgences, Luther's personal experience had prepared him to break with such a Christianity.

But this new experience of Luther's led him to break with the Roman church in other points as well. Luther came to believe that the man who

had thus by faith gained the favour of God was a free man—free to live out the results of his faith without the guidance of rules and priests. As the Christian was already a saved man, his life here on earth is, Luther taught, as sacred as his life in heaven will be. In this life he may as truly express his Christian character here as there. To do this he must not withdraw from the common duties and the common relationships to a monastery, but must do the common tasks, live the family life and conquer the common temptations. These views at once cut away the authority of the clergy and destroyed the motive for the ascetic life of celibacy which had created the great religious orders. More than this, if Luther's teaching was true, the old distinction between clergy and laity broke down. The service of a cobbler was as truly religious service as that of a bishop. In the course of the centuries the hierarchy had become the real church; Luther's teaching restored the priesthood of believers. Religion is a thing of the people. The clergy are the representatives of the people; it is the people who rule. From the extreme application of this principle in a real democracy Luther shrank, but the principle was involved nevertheless in his recogni-



tion of the sacredness of the common life of man.

Luther's teachings ennobled for the Christian all right work. For a maid to cook and clean and do other housework was divine service because it fulfilled God's command in helping to care for the home. Into all such service Luther urged men to put a truly Christian spirit. He would have men work for the good of others and thus show forth the love of God. It is men, not God, who need our service, and whoever turns good works to his own advantage does no good work. He set forth in his sermons in great detail what love to one's fellow means, describing how it should enter into all the relationships of life. He even ventured into finance, to show how it should be applied to business. Christian love, expressing itself in social service, has never been more persuasively urged. Luther's views of the Christian life led him to discard the Catholic conception of the offices of the clergy and of the church as a sacramental institution. Believers gained their salvation by a direct experience from God; the church consisted of the community of such believers. One gained admission to the church, he believed, by faith, not, as other reformers held, by election. Nevertheless he held

the church to be an indispensable means of salvation. To it those should go who would know something of Christ, and not attempt to build bridges into heaven by their own reason. Outside the Christian church there was, he held, no truth, no Christ, no salvation. This did not mean, as with Rome, that salvation was confined to the members of one particular organization; it meant that the knowledge of the forgiving love of God in Christ comes to men through Christian believers. In his view the church was the means of salvation because it teaches the gospel, not because it conveys a grace. Luther was led to take these new positions in consequence of his own personal experience of salvation. In the sixteenth century they seemed very radical, and were thought to threaten an overthrow of the fundamental institutions of society. In reality they but touched the surface of the religious life. They were not a complete and well rounded system of doctrines, for on most of the fundamental theological conceptions Luther stood in full agreement with the Latin church. Like some of the great theologians of that church he regarded God as an angry and terrible judge, whose fearful wrath avenges sin and permits no guilty

man to escape. Notwithstanding his conception of the forgiving love of God in Christ, the anger of God formed the background of all Luther's thinking. It was only in Christ and to the Christian believer that God was thought to disclose his love as a Father. For all others he had only vengeance and wrath. Luther was also in accord with the mediaeval theologians in his estimate of human nature. The conception that the natural man is depraved and helpless was as fundamental to Luther's thought as was the wrath of God. This view was no accidental survival; it was confirmed by all Luther's own experience. His treatise on the "Bondage of the Will" exhibits his permanent conviction on this point. He believed that to throw any doubt upon human guilt, or to hint at the possibility of the existence of human virtue, was to belittle the grace of God. In his thinking man must be degraded in order that God may stand out in his inherent exaltation.

Luther's conception of the Atonement was shaped by his views of God and man. Christ, he declared, bore the anger of God itself—the eternal anger which our sins deserved. It was this Divine anger which constituted the inner sufferings of Jesus.

God, seeing men overwhelmed by the curse of the law, laid, Luther thought, upon Christ the sins of each individual man, saying, "Be thou Peter, that denier; Paul, that persecutor, blasphemer and cruel oppressor; David, that adulterer; that sinner which did eat the apple in Paradise; that thief which hanged on the cross; and briefly be Thou the person which hath committed the sins of all men. See, therefore that thou pay and satisfy for them." Christ had, then, suffered the full penalty for human sin. He had also rendered full and perfect obedience. The merit of this obedience could be imputed to the believer. As it was only thus that Luther could justify his faith in the forgiving love of God, the doctrine of the Atonement assumed in his thinking a prominence even greater than in that of Anselm, and through the influence of Luther came to hold a more fundamental place in Christian thought.

Luther's faith in the value of the Atonement depended upon another article of belief which he held in common with the Catholic church, viz.: the deity of Christ. It is, according to Luther, only in Christ that God is known as a gracious Father. Apart from this revelation He is wholly a God

of wrath. The stress which Luther gave to the Atonement thus gave to the Deity of Christ an added emphasis. Luther's inconsistency as a thinker is especially manifest in his theory of the sacraments. To be consistent with his theory that salvation comes by the forgiving love of God in Christ alone, Luther held in theory that the sacraments were nothing else than signs. Nevertheless, so comforting was the thought of the real presence of Christ in the elements of the Lord's supper, that Luther could not give it up. True, he no longer interpreted the significance of the real presence in the terms of sacramental theology; the body and blood of Christ were regarded as an irrefragable proof of the death of Christ for the sinner, not as the nourishment of his spiritual life. Luther's belief in the real presence is not, therefore necessarily inconsistent with his theological position. The incongruity between the new cloth and the old garment is much more conspicuous in his retention of the rite of infant baptism. This rite Luther not only retained, but accepted with it the traditional doctrine of baptismal regeneration. In his general theological scheme Luther did not believe in regeneration at all. The saved man did not, in his view,

experience a moral transformation, he simply, by being forgiven, escaped the wrath of God. In order to make infant baptism fit into this system Luther was led to declare that in the act of baptism faith is directly bestowed upon the infant, so that he can obtain forgiveness. Baptism thus became a channel of faith as it had been to the Catholics a channel of grace. In reality the rite was thoroughly inconsistent with Luther's position, and it was due to custom and long association that he was unable to discard it.

Another point in which Luther's thought revealed an inharmonious blending of the old and new was his idea of Biblical authority. In reality his authority for his system of doctrine was his own experience. He believed these things because he had tried them in the laboratory of his own life and proved their worth. Accordingly he judged the books of the Bible by the same criterion. The Epistles of Paul, he declared, are higher in authority than Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The Gospel of John was to him the unique, tender, true Gospel, while the Epistle of James was an epistle of straw. Similar judgments upon other books were freely expressed.

In controversy, however, he felt the need of some external authority to set over against the authority of the church. It was natural, therefore, that he should appeal to the Scriptures as to a divinely inspired and infallible collection of books, which since the second century had been everywhere received. This course brought confusion into his theological thinking.

In the course of his controversies with the Reformers in Switzerland Luther was led into an inconsistent position as to the relation of the state to the church. He insisted that the civil government should see that sound teaching was maintained in the churches. He had taught that the Christian man was free to live out his Christian life. His theory of the duty of government could be reconciled with his earlier views only on the supposition that those alone who agreed with Luther were Christian, and that these had the burden of ruling the world laid upon them.

Such in brief was the thought of the man who laid the foundations of the Reformation. He did yeoman service in helping men to see that religion was to be experienced in the soul, that it was not a matter of ritual. His courageous stand, taken at

personal risk, heartened others, and won the earlier battles for freedom of conscience. In reality, however, Luther had broken with the past at a few superficial points only, and had stepped but a very little way out from the deep shadows of the Latin theology.

The principal figure in the pioneer work of the Reformation in Switzerland was Huldreich Zwingli. He was a man of different temperament and training from Luther, and was in a good degree independent of the great German Reformer. His teaching was accordingly radically different from Luther's. Zwingli, when quite young, came under the influence of the humanistic learning, to which the revival of Greek studies had given rise. He belonged, accordingly, to that school, of which Erasmus was the most distinguished member. Zwingli had been dedicated by his parents to the priesthood, and the profession seems not to have been uncongenial to him. It afforded leisure for the pursuit of humanistic studies, and opportunities to influence young men in the same direction. Beginning his duties as a parish priest at the age of twenty-two, he soon became deeply interested in the social conditions of the people among whom he



worked. These were first the people of Glarus, then those of Einsiedeln, whither he went in 1516. These social conditions convinced Zwingli that a reformation was sorely needed. In 1519 he was transferred to the principal parish church of Zurich, where he continued to labour in the interests of reform, though still remaining within the pale of the church.

Zwingli had never passed through a religious crisis such as Luther had experienced. He had undergone the less emotional religious development of a cooler temperament and a scholarly thinker. His thought was always of a less personal character than that of the German. As Zwingli, during his early pastoral labours, had sought to bring the humanistic philosophy to bear upon social and religious conditions, the fundamental ideas of his system of thought were formed—his conception of God, his view of the Bible as the basis of authority. Shortly before his removal to Zurich, Zwingli became familiar with Luther's teaching concerning salvation by faith alone through grace and not through works. He was at once convinced of the Biblical character of this doctrine, and saw that it supplied to his own system a needed element which

would make it adequate to meet the situation which faced him. Zwingli's open break with the Catholic church came in 1523. Although Zwingli assimilated this one doctrine of his great contemporary his system of thought as a whole was radically different. He was too much of a humanist to think of the goodness of God as so exclusively bound up with the work of Jesus Christ. His broad conception of nature led him to recognize to a limited degree, but still far more than his contemporaries did, the immanence of God in the world. He held that the creation had been called into existence by God's love; all grades and ranges of existences were so many revelations of the Divine existence. They had been created that they might rejoice in God; He operates in and through them. God's action in the world is immediate, even miracles are not interruptions of law, but happen in accordance with law.

In accord with his wider conception of the goodness of God, Zwingli held that many of the best among the heathen, such as Heracles, Theseus, Socrates, Aristides, Antigonus, Numa, Camillus, the Catos, and Scipios, had been saved. Such a view was to many of his contemporaries shocking in the extreme. Zwingli regarded Christianity, not

as God's only revelation of himself, but as the supreme revelation. The Bible was taken as the authority in religious life because it revealed God's will.

Zwingli accepted, as did Luther, the doctrine of the trinity, but his broader system of thought laid less stress upon the Deity of Christ. Like Luther he taught the depravity of human nature, although he explained differently the consequences of the fall. While, therefore, he proclaimed with Luther the gospel of salvation by faith, the doctrine fitted into a very different whole. Luther conceived salvation as an escape from the wrath of God; Zwingli as ability to do the will of God. To the former, there was no true religion except Christianity; to the latter Christianity was the highest and best of the religions—the fullest revelation of the will of God. To the former Christ revealed God's redeeming love; to the latter he revealed God's will. Luther thought of faith as the acceptance of God's forgiving love in Christ; Zwingli, as the acceptance both of this and of God's providential love revealed in all his works. The former found in the bread and wine the real presence of Christ; the latter saw in them a memorial of the death of Christ. To

deny the real presence in the eucharist, seemed to Luther to rob the world itself of such a presence, but Zwingli saw no need to confine to the eucharist a presence of which the world was full.

The phase of Zwingli's teaching which most profoundly influenced Protestantism was his doctrine of God. He did not, like Luther, think of God so much in personal terms as a Creator and Father, but in abstract terms, as an omniscient, omnipresent, all-powerful Being. In time he came to regard God as practically the only active being in the universe; not merely the first cause, but the only cause. His power is unlimited; evil as well as good is His work. He is above all law, so that, though all the actions of men are His, He can do no wrong. He determines not only the fate of men, but their deeds. He predestines some to eternal life, others to eternal death, that in the former He may show forth His mercy; in the latter, His justice. The ground of salvation, then, is not faith, but election. It proceeds from nothing in man, but solely from the will of God.

On this view the church became, not a community of believers, but a community of the elect. It included all these whatever their condition, whether

Christian or heathen, believers or unbelievers, infants or adults, the dead as well as the living.

It was this doctrine of election, taken up by John Calvin, which was to shape the type of Protestantism that was to be most influential for the next three hundred years. As a thinker Zwingli occupies in the history of Protestant thought a much more important place than Calvin, for it is to Zwingli rather than to Calvin that this doctrine is due. Zwingli appears here as the originator, Calvin as the follower, though it is hardly possible that Zwingli should not have been influenced by Augustine.

John Calvin, the third of our reformers, was a Frenchman by birth. Born in 1509, the work of reformation had been in progress for a generation before he participated in it. During this generation much had happened. Changes of conception with reference to the foundations of religion and morality are always attended with unsettlement and danger. The unsettlement resulting from the teachings of the reformers had taken in Germany the form of a peasant's war. As the new teachings seemed to turn things upside down, many were ready to compromise truth in the interest of stability and order. In

1534, two years before Calvin published the first edition of his *Institutes*, the Society of Jesus had been organized to promote a counter reformation. The Jesuits presented to the perplexed age a definite and tangible authority and guide in religion—an infallible church. If Protestantism was to succeed it must have an authority equally definite to offer and an equally tangible working system. The man who gave her these was John Calvin.

As Calvin had moved to Switzerland before he began his work as a Protestant, he came under the influence of the writings of Zwingli, by whom he was profoundly influenced. This influence was not direct, but reached Calvin through the writings of Martin Bucer.<sup>1</sup> Under this influence Calvin shaped his doctrine of God and was led to adopt the doctrine of election. Calvin's doctrine of God was, however, much less philosophical than that of Zwingli. Zwingli's conception of God rested on a basis of reason; Calvin's on a basis of theological authority.

To Calvin God was a personal Being, whose will controls the universe. Calvin professed to derive

<sup>1</sup> See A. C. McGiffert's *Protestant Thought Before Kant*, p. 86.

all his knowledge of God from the Scriptures; in reality he selected those passages from the Bible which taught the kind of God which Calvin regarded as theologically necessary, and ignored others which were inconsistent with his views. To Calvin God is the absolute sovereign of the worlds. The Catholic counter-reformation was insisting upon the authority of kings in matters political; Calvin insisted upon the sovereignty of God in every department of life, political as well as religious. Calvin's God was, moreover, the God of a Deist. He was thoroughly distinct from the world and separate from nature. God's only connection with nature, since it left His hands as a finished creation, was by the intervention of miracle. Angels and demons were the intermediaries between God and man. Satan himself is but God's agent for the accomplishment of evil. This distant God, Calvin believed, had revealed Himself through the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. No other revelation of God's will had been made. The Scriptures do not reveal the inmost nature of Deity, but only what man needs to know and practice. In this practical realm the Scriptures are supreme. It was thus in the clash with Catholicism that Calvin found a logical



basis of authority as objective and definite as theirs. To the dogma of an infallible church, he opposed the dogma of an infallible Bible. Luther and Zwingli had both held in different ways to the authority of Scripture; Calvin hardened this authority into that dogma, which has made it so hard for Protestants to accept the results of modern investigation. The tendency of his doctrine of Scripture was to exalt every part of the Bible to an equality with every other part. For the time the dogma supplied a useful and needed weapon of defense, but in the end it introduced endless perplexities into Protestant thought.

Zwingli's doctrine of election, as it had been elaborated by Bucer, was accepted by Calvin and given a central place in his system. It formed a natural corollary to Calvin's conception of the sovereignty of God. It was inconceivable to him that any finite will should thwart the decrees of the Infinite. God predestined from the beginning some to everlasting life, others to everlasting death. The fall of Adam had not been an unforeseen catastrophe; it had been decreed by God before the foundation of the world.

Intimately connected with the doctrine of election



is Calvin's conception of human nature. This he believed to be wholly depraved. God had decreed that Adam's sin should be imputed to his entire posterity. All men were accordingly born under the condemnation of God. A few are elected to salvation, but God leaves the vast majority to the condemnation which they so richly deserve. The elect are not chosen on account of their goodness, but by the act of God's sovereign will. Deeply ingrained in all Calvin's thinking was a profound distrust of human nature. While he has in the *Institutes* a section on liberty, he accorded to man no real liberty. Liberty to him was but freedom from the necessity of obeying the ceremonial law.

In his conception of the Atonement Calvin took a position similar to that of Luther, insisting that Christ had been a substitute for humanity, and had borne the actual penalty that men should have borne. Man deserved eternal death; Christ accordingly suffered eternal death. It is no wonder, said Calvin, that He is said to have descended into hell, since He suffered that death which the wrath of God inflicts upon all transgressors. He suffered in His soul the dreadful torments of a soul condemned and irretrievably lost. There were not

wanting those who regarded this as a new and unheard-of heresy, but it was the view which on the whole prevailed. Thus the Anselmic doctrine of satisfaction was transformed to a doctrine of actual substitution.

Calvin's conception of the Christian life was extremely rigorous. The Christian should live for the other world, and must eschew the pleasures and frivolities of this world. He thought no middle position possible. The earth must either be vile in our estimation, or retain our immoderate love. This Puritanic conception of the Christian life he applied in great detail, and in his rule in the city of Geneva endeavoured to enforce it.

Like Zwingli, Calvin defined the Church as the totality of the elect, but he insisted, as Zwingli had not, upon the functions and authority of the visible church. Where the word is truly taught and the sacraments rightly administered there, he believed, was the visible church, and outside of its pale there was ordinarily no salvation. In Calvin's conception of the church the clergy played a conspicuous part. In the place assigned to them Calvin's system approaches the Roman. The clergy, the interpreters of the Divine word, are the delegates

of the remote sovereign; they are separate from the people and are empowered by the Holy Spirit for their high office. Thus the Reformed clergy were intended to take the place of the Roman hierarchy and to have power over the congregations. In his conception of the relations of church and state, Calvin approached much more nearly than Luther the Roman conception. He agreed with the earlier Reformer that it was the duty of the state to cherish the worship of God, preserve pure doctrine, and defend the constitution of the church, but, whereas Luther had left it to civil governors to determine what true religion is, Calvin regarded the state as but the handmaid of the church. It is the function, he held, of the clergy to determine God's will and truth; the obligation to act accordingly rests upon the civil authority.

Calvin at Geneva became the most influential of the reformers. Young men flocked thither, learned his system and went back to introduce it into their own lands. John Knox thus conquered Scotland for Calvin, and Calvinism became the prevailing type of Protestantism in France and the Low Countries. Calvin's theology was far more widely accepted than his church government. It was, for

example, accepted by the Independents in England. This theology, so logically consistent to one who accepted its fundamental assumptions, became in the centuries which followed the most influential system in Protestantism. Even the Lutheran and Anglican communions were profoundly influenced by it.

As we look back upon the three great religious teachers here studied, it is clear that the Protestant world owes them a great debt. They broke for millions of men the bonds of Rome; they shaped Protestant thought to fight and to survive in an age of stress. Knowledge, though then rapidly increasing, was fragmentary and partial as compared with the knowledge of the present time; these men adapted the Christian message to the knowledge of their time in a way that made it grip men's hearts and demand the consecration of their wills.

If, however, we put the Christian message as these men conceived it in comparison with either of the creative forms of that message which we find in the New Testament, it is clear that the message of the Reformers lacked most of the elements which had made the Christian message powerful in the first century. In Luther only do we find any real

appreciation of the possibility and value of a personal experience of God, and Luther's view of this is so veiled under a misapprehension of the Christ-like nature of God, that the experience appears in an altogether different perspective. In the system of Calvin no real and vital experience of God by the Christian is recognized. The whole is almost as formal as the system of Rome, and is much more cold, since it lacks far fewer elements which appeal to the imagination.

Out of Calvinism there have come much good and much harm. Calvin's doctrine of the sovereignty of God has had much to do in overthrowing the tyranny of kings and establishing republics. On the other hand his identification of the letter of the Bible with the will of God has been responsible in recent centuries for much religious coldness, doubt, and even atheism. It is evident as the years roll by that the Christian message as interpreted by the Reformers is neither a complete nor a final form of the Gospel of God to man.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE ACCORDING TO THE EARLY FRIENDS

THE movement which we call the Reformation was not a unit. It was like an incoming tide; some of its earlier waves lapped and gently disturbed the inert seaweed of the marshy shore; other waves submerged this weed altogether, and raised the surface to heights which had not for a long time been reached; while still other and later waves formed a kind of spring-tide, and rose to heights that had not been attained since the far-off spring-time of Christianity, sweeping away many an ecclesiastical hut and fishing camp which had been built along the shore. The Reformation in England, which was at first a political movement, was the earlier wave. It disturbed the seaweed of Popery, baptismal regeneration, works of supererogation, and reduced the Sacraments from seven to two. The Protestant Reformation on the Continent is comparable to the second wave, for it

swept so high that it submerged the episcopacy and endeavoured to take the Church in its organization back to the beginning of the second century, to a time when all presbyters were equal, and no monarchical bishop had robbed them of their power. The Quaker Reformation, inaugurated by George Fox, was the highest wave of the Reformation—its spring-tide—sweeping as it did the presbyters themselves away, and endeavouring to carry the organization back in form to primitive Apostolic days. All outward Sacraments, even the two retained by most other Protestants, were also swept away, as were all forms of priesthood.

If we ask why these early Friends were so radical in their reformation, the only adequate answer is that they had made a new discovery of the meaning of the old Gospel. They had ascertained by actual experience that God is among men; that He quickens every penitent heart; that He makes the soul of the common Christian His dwelling-place; and that He gives His spiritual gifts regardless of culture and social standing.

In other words, just as both Catholicism and Calvinism were based on the supposition that God once visited this world, but has now retreated into

the far-off heavens, leaving a Church or a Book to represent Him, Quakerism was based on the certainty that God is still in His world, that now, as of old, He reveals Himself to consecrated souls, that it is the privilege of the organized Church and of each member to be guided by His living voice now, and that the Church ought to be so organized as to make this possible privilege an actual reality. It was thus that the early Friends proposed a new basis of authority in religion. Rome said: The supreme authority is the Church. Protestantism said, even in its episcopal form in England: The supreme authority is the Scriptures. The Friends said: The supreme authority is the Spirit.

The long struggle for peace through which George Fox went before he reached this new ground has been so often recounted that it is unnecessary for me to repeat it here. It is no doubt well known to you all. The story of his agony and of the voice that came to him as he walked in the fields, "There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition," is the stock-in-trade of all lecturers on early Quakerism, and, indeed, of most Quaker preachers. It is not perhaps so well known that before this "opening" came to him, giving George Fox peace,



the great fact that God is in His world and dwells with His people was borne in upon him. He says:—

“At another time it was opened in me that God, who made the world, did not dwell in temples made with hands. This at first seemed a strange word, because both priests and people used to call their temples or churches dreadful places, holy ground and the temples of God. But the Lord showed me clearly that He did not dwell in these temples which men had commanded and set up, but in people’s hearts; for both Stephen and the Apostle Paul bore testimony that He did not dwell in temples made with hands, not even in that which He had once commanded to be built, since He put an end to it; but that His people were His temple, and He dwelt in them.”<sup>1</sup>

The practical use which he made of this great truth is indicated in another passage in his Journal, where he says:—

“I was sent to turn people from darkness to the Light, that they might receive Christ Jesus; for to as many as should receive Him in His light, I saw He would give power to become the sons of God; which power I had obtained by receiving Christ. I was to direct people to the Spirit that gave forth the Scriptures, by which they might be led into all truth, and up to Christ and God, as those had been who gave them forth.”<sup>2</sup>

Many other passages might be quoted to show that the indwelling presence of God was the main-spring of all George Fox’s gospel. The same is

<sup>1</sup> R. M. Jones, *Autobiography of George Fox*, i. p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. p. 103.

true of all the real mystics of the movement. I will quote a bit from another of the real mystics, Isaac Pennington, whose writings are not now so widely read as those of George Fox. In speaking of his conversion Isaac Pennington says:—

“Yes, indeed, I am satisfied at my very heart. Truly my heart is united to Him, whom I longed after, in an everlasting covenant of pure life and peace. . . . The Lord opened my spirit, the Lord gave me the certain and sensible feeling of the pure seed [so the early Friends frequently called God in the soul] which had been with me from the beginning; the Lord caused His power to fall upon me, and gave me such an inward demonstration and feeling of the seed of life that I cried out in my spirit: *This is He; this is He; there is not another, there never was another. He was always near me though I knew it not.* . . . I gave up to be instructed, exercised, and led by Him, in the waiting for and feeling of His holy seed, that all might be wrought out of me which could not live with the seed.”<sup>1</sup>

The practical theological use to which Isaac Pennington put this experience of the indwelling God is less technically expressed:—

“Learn then [he says] and know in thyself that Spirit of prophecy which spoke in all the martyrs. Hear that, come to that, keep to that. Feel the union, the fellowship, the spreading of that in thee. When that bids thee go, go; when that bids thee come, come; when that bids thee do this, do it.”<sup>2</sup>

Again, he says:—

“Indeed, a Christian is nothing, and can do nothing,

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, ed. 1761, ii. p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. pp. 32 ff.

without the power and presence of the Spirit of God in him. . . . So, then the Spirit is the first thing to be looked after by him who would be truly and well-groundedly religious."<sup>1</sup>

Isaac Pennington's conception of the relation of such impulses of the Spirit to the authority of Scripture is expressed in another place, in which he is explaining (Rev. xxii. 18, 19) the passage about adding to or diminishing from the things which are written in this book. Pennington says:—

"He that giveth any other meaning of any Scripture other than what is the true meaning thereof, he addeth and diminisheth; he taketh away the true sense, he addeth a sense not true. The Spirit of the Lord is the true expositor of Scriptures; He never addeth or diminisheth: but man being without that Spirit doth but guess, doth but imagine, doth but study or invent a meaning, and so he is ever adding or diminishing. This is the sense, saith one; this is the sense, saith another; this is the sense, saith a third; this, saith a fourth; another, that is witty and large in his comprehension, he says they will all stand; another, perhaps more witty than he, says none of them will stand, and he invents a meaning different from them all. And then, when they are thus expounding them, they will say, take the sense thus, it will yield this observation or take it thus, and it will afford this observation. Doth not this plainly show that he who thus saith hath not the Spirit of the Lord to open Scripture unto him, and manifest which is the true sense, but is working in the ministry of darkness? . . . But if the Spirit of the Lord immediately open anything to a son or daughter, he cries, this is an adding to the word. The Scripture is written; there are no more revelations to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, i. p. 36.

be expected now; the curse saith he is to them that add.... Having judged his own darkness to be light, he must needs judge the true light to be darkness.”<sup>1</sup>

In still another passage Pennington says:—

“In the light I meet with infallibility. The light of God’s Spirit is a certain and infallible rule, *and the eye that sees it is a certain eye.*”<sup>2</sup>

And again:—

“Every man may err in his interpretation of the Scriptures further than he hath a certain and infallible opening of them to his Spirit, by that Spirit which gave them forth.”<sup>3</sup>

These passages clearly show how the real mystics regarded the Spirit as the final authority. He interpreted for them the Scriptures, and gave them revelations which they regarded as of equal authority with the Scriptures. It was this practical consciousness of the presence of God with them that gave the early Friends their power. I am not defending the way Isaac Pennington puts the matter. No modern scholar with present-day knowledge could do that. I will point out a little later wherein he was mistaken. In the fundamental fact of direct access to God, however, he was right.

Robert Barclay, who set himself to defend the

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, i. p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by R. M. Jones in *Social Law*, p. 179.

<sup>3</sup> *Works*, i. p. 239.

Quaker position from an England steeped in Presbyterianism, really gave away the strength of the Quaker stronghold. He said:—

“We do look upon them [the Scriptures] as the only outward judge of controversies among Christians; and that whatever is contrary to their testimony is to be rejected as false.”<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the idea in his mind was something like the sound modern principle, that the impression of the individual should be judged by the best in the universal Christian consciousness. Such an impression would have been conveyed had he said: “Whatever is contrary to the best spirit revealed in the Scriptures may be rejected as false,” for the New Testament contains the best the Christian consciousness has ever known. His concession, as it was worded, however, practically made the Scriptures the standard again, and gave away the vantage ground of the position of Fox and Pennington. Barclay’s phrase, “Whatever is contrary to their testimony,” was so understood as to make the letter of every portion of Scripture supreme, however transitory or accidental the form of that letter might be.

It is because of this that in our own time so many

<sup>1</sup> *Apology*, Pref. p. 6.

Friends hold the Calvinistic view with reference to the Bible, and have discarded the very thing toward which the thought of our time is driving everybody else, and which Fox and Pennington held more than two hundred years ago. Had Barclay only known his Bible as men know it today, he would have known that the Spirit as represented by Scripture is not in details consistent, but declared, for example, by Isaiah that the temple at Jerusalem was necessary to Jehovah, and by Jeremiah that it was not, and that both were true for the time when they were uttered.

The heart of the Quaker message of the seventeenth century was this rediscovery of the direct access of every soul to God. How thirsty the age was for such a message the thousands who enthusiastically welcomed it by joining Friends is eloquent testimony

This Quaker Reformation differed from other forms of the Reformation in that it was a movement of the common people. Most of the religious movements during Christian history have originated with scholarly or university men. So true is this that a distinguished author and preacher recently declared in my hearing that all such movements—

movements originating as the result of new vision—came from scholars. He overlooked George Fox, however. Fox was no scholar. He knew his Bible, but all between him and Biblical times was to him almost a blank. He knew just enough of it to regard it as a long-continued apostasy. Other mystics had borne in substance before him much the same message as Fox. Such were Ruysbroek, Eckhardt, and Jacob Boehme, but he did not know it. In an indirect way he was, probably, unconsciously indebted to at least one of these, but his message had grown out of his own experience, and was as original as that of an Old Testament prophet.

Perhaps it was in part because George Fox was of the people that they heard him so gladly. But, at all events, the enthusiasm of the throngs that listened was equalled by the courage and energy of the early preachers, and before the end of Fox's life this message had been carried all over the British Isles, to several countries of Continental Europe, to the Barbary States, to Turkey, and to many parts of the New World.

The real reason, however, why the early Friends gained such a hearing was that they brought a message for which men were hungry—the message

of the nearness of God and His accessibility to all. This message was practically new to the Anglo-Saxon world, notwithstanding that in the previous century it had been proclaimed in part by the "Family of Love." Men with needy souls were no longer pointed simply to a Book, or directed to submit themselves to the guidance of a church; they were neither told that a far-off God, who had once visited the world, had instituted an organization for their torture, miscalled by the name of guidance; nor advised that this same far-off God had written a Book for their instruction, which told of religious experiences which they themselves might not hope to attain. They were rather told to look within their own hearts, to expect the Divine voice to speak there, to heed its faintest whisper, that by accustoming themselves to its accents larger messages might be heard more distinctly; they were directed to read the Biblical record of God's dealings with the men of old that they might know what to expect God to do in their own lives, and as needy souls listened and obeyed, they were enchanted to find themselves in actual communion with God.

George Fox called Quakerism primitive Christi-



anity revived; and it would indeed be difficult, short of the Apostolic time, to find such thoroughgoing mysticism so widely proclaimed and so gladly accepted.

The consciousness of the indwelling presence of God gave the early Friends a new sense of the importance of Christian living. If God dwelt in man, man must walk worthily of God; if the believer were a temple of the Holy Ghost, he must bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. This was manifested in all their life, and was the mainspring of the characteristic simplicity and sobriety of Quaker living, as well as of that uprightness which has made the name Quaker a guarantee for honesty. It was also this principle which led Friends to abandon judicial oaths; they saw that it is inconsistent for a Christian to have two standards of truth—to tell the truth more exactly when he has especially prayed God to damn him if he does not, than he would upon ordinary occasions. This refusal caused them much suffering, which was bravely borne. Their contemporaries did not understand their attitude, and many Friends submitted to imprisonment for their refusal, but their persistence won in the end a freedom of con-

science on this point for the Anglo-Saxon world.

There had been mystics before George Fox, but no one since the early Christian days had given such practical expression as he and those whom he called about him to their faith in God's presence. It was this which led to the form of worship which they instituted. If the people were to be taught, God must teach them. If He did not do it by inspiring some one to speak, He might be doing it directly by His Spirit. At all events, it was of little worth for man to speak if he were not inspired. Indeed, it was worse than useless, for he might prevent some one from hearing the voice of God speaking in the heart. Hence it was that they gave practical expression to their faith in God's presence with them by meeting in silence, but accorded the widest liberty for vocal exercises on the part of a member of the congregation, if moved thereto by the Spirit.

The same idea underlay their conception of the ministry. The one qualification for it was to have a Divine anointing—that is, to receive a portion of the Spirit of Christ into one's soul, to enlighten him and to teach him what to say. This was the positive side of George Fox's great opening, that being

bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not sufficient to make a man a minister of Christ. It was not only the belief that one must have a special anointing with the Spirit of Christ in order to make him a minister in the first place, but he must receive a few fresh drops of the holy oil, so to speak, for each occasion. This was in course of time interpreted to mean that the Spirit could illuminate a man only at the hour of meeting, so that all possible preparation was excluded. It was also held by Friends almost from the start that the Divine voice speaks more surely through the feelings than through the mind, so that as time passed the mind was sadly undervalued and the quality of the ministry suffered accordingly; but in spite of all this the organization of early Quaker worship and of early Quaker ministry was a magnificent practical demonstration of faith in the actual guidance of God in all that pertains to the religious life, such as the world had not seen since the days of the Montanists.

It was this same faith in the actual presence of God in the soul which led to the discarding of the ordinances. Real baptism is by the Spirit only. What does he who has that need of a watery sign? Nay, does not practical experience teach that one

who submits to the rite with water often has the attention so fastened upon that that he misses the importance of the real thing? There is likewise no feeding of the soul in communion except upon the Bread of Life Himself. The outward symbol of bread and wine frequently, like other outward symbols, comes to conceal rather than to reveal the thing signified. Hence the outward rites were cast aside, and Friends became the most radical of reformers. True, some others, like the Schwenkfelders, had gone a little way in this direction, but none were so thoroughgoing as the Friends. In the Roman and Greek Churches there are seven Sacraments; Protestants had reduced these to two; Friends reduced them to zero. Or rather we ought, in Lowell's phrase, to say they tried to "make each meal a sacrament."

From their doctrine of the nearness of God these early Friends gained a new sense of the value of man, and hence gained a new doctrine of man. If each soul was visited by God—was a temple of God—each soul was of infinite value. If God would visit the soul of a cobbler as quickly as the soul of a king, all distinctions of class rested upon an unreal foundation. While their doctrine was in reality an

exaltation of man, it often appeared to their contemporaries to be a humbling of the great. This doctrine led them to see that women were on an equality with men. God as often visited women and endowed them with spiritual gifts as He did men; so, far in advance of the rest of the world, they accorded woman her true position, believing with Paul that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, but all are one. This sense of the value of every man led them to see that war, which is but wholesale murder, is absolutely wrong, being both inhuman and contrary to the Spirit of Christ. Far in advance of others, they urged international arbitration, and William Penn laid down a plan for European peace which the Hague Conference is but just realizing.<sup>1</sup>

This sense of human equality, arising from the new appreciation of the value of human nature, led incidentally to some queer customs, which are but just dying out. Englishmen had up to this time always worn their bonnets, and the hats which suc-

<sup>1</sup> See his *Essay toward the Present and Future Peace of Europe*. So able an authority as William C. Dennis, Ph.D., LL.D., Assistant Solicitor of the Department of State at Washington, in an address delivered at Providence, R. I., in June, 1908, clearly demonstrated this point.

ceeded them, in the house, as the Turk still always wears his fez. In their homes they kept their hats on, even at table. The Englishman had developed one deviation from this custom, which the Turk has not; he removed his hat when prayer was offered, as a sign of reverence to God. Otherwise they wore their hats even in church, and Puritan ministers preached with their hats on. By an innovation in English custom men were expected now to remove their hats in the presence of the King or of his officials. When Cromwell was Lord Protector, he and his officials demanded the same honour. This the Friends refused to give, on the ground that it was offering to some men the same homage as to God. In reality, it was a refusal to recognize that any man could be appreciably exalted above any other man, and was an expression of their appreciation of the value and dignity of the common man.

In Fox's time the pronoun "you" was still always a plural, though the custom of saying "you" to a superior—while "thou" was still used to an equal or an inferior—existed. Underlying the innovation was the subtle flattery that the person addressed as "you" equalled in value several ordinary persons. Again, the sense of all human worth, as

they perceived it, forbade the Friends to follow this custom. In the sight of God one pure soul was as good as another, and their burning sincerity made such flattery odious to them. They accordingly addressed every man, however exalted, by means of the same "thou" which was addressed to the humblest menial. Religious conservatism has, as so often in religious history, perpetuated these customs of the hat and the plain language long after their meaning has vanished, but we, who today are discarding them, ought to know the past well enough to appreciate the sturdy testimony to equality and brotherhood which these "testimonies" originally expressed. In the eighteenth century this sense of the worth of every man began to impress Friends, far in advance of others, with the wickedness of slavery, and they became the earliest advocates of the abolition of the slave.

Fired with no less a message than the nearness of God and His willingness to forgive—nay, His actual presence already in every soul—a message, too, which infinitely exalted every human being as it revealed the fact that God regards that being as His temple, is it any wonder that the Friends were gladly heard? When they saw how blind the

Church at large was to this message, is it any wonder that they travelled everywhere, preaching it with surpassing zeal? This thought that God actually visits every soul, so far from cutting for the early Friends the nerve of missionary effort, was the chief motive which sent them forth. They gave their message with confidence, assured that God had visited the soul in advance to prepare the way for His truth. The word of God to Pascal, "Thou wouldst not seek Me, if thou hadst not already found Me," was in substance their philosophy of the conversion of any person.

We make a great mistake if we think these early Friends pointed men to look within to some abstract Divine principle which they would find in themselves. We are sometimes misled, because in the obsolete language of the seventeenth century they used the words "principle," "seed," etc. They did believe that every soul possesses a capacity for God, that the Spirit visits every one, that unless a man finds God in his own soul he will not find Him anywhere, but they by no means undervalued the objective revelation of God's goodness and redeeming love in Jesus Christ. The preaching and writings of all these sturdy Quaker apostles is witness to their



sincere belief that the voice of God within man needs to be quickened by a vivid appreciation of the infinite love of the Father as manifested in the life and death of Jesus Christ. Their mysticism was no mere moonshine; it was true to the facts of history and of experience. Their gospel was not the vague and vain pointing of men to an impalpable principle within; it was the vigorous presentation of the revelation of the love of God in Jesus Christ, and a call to every man to find the motive for yielding to that love not only in the Divine story enshrined in a Book, but on account of the confirmation of that story written by God's own Spirit, first in the structure and needs of their own hearts, and then in an actual experience of its power in themselves. It was a great message; it was grandly conceived; it was heroically delivered.

And yet there came a time in the eighteenth century when this message, delivered by the second generation of Quakers, began to fail to gain a hearing. As we look back now to the literature which it called forth, we find the message itself put in phrases so bizarre and obsolete that it fails to grip the hearts even of those of us who have grown up in a traditional reverence for its value. Why is this?

The answer is no doubt manifold; but it lies in part in the fact that the early Friends interpreted their message, both as to its vocabulary and its thought forms, in the concepts of their century. They reached men in the seventeenth century because they spoke the language of that century. The eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries have all been different, their religious atmosphere is in each case peculiar to itself; we have failed to continue the work of the early Friends because we have continued to repeat their phrases instead of translating their central truth into the language of each successive century.

While the early Friends put their message in the best form for the seventeenth century, it was a form which, judged by our present knowledge, had some grave defects. Robert Barclay, the theologian of the movement, was under the direct influence of the philosopher Descartes, as one of our young Friends has proved in a doctor's dissertation written during last year. The form in which the Friends put their doctrine of the inner Light was influenced by this Cartesian philosophy. Descartes taught that man is given certain innate ideas by his Creator; they are Divine ideas, though apparently inborn in the

man; but they are no more related to the man's human nature than the cartridge is related to the gun; they are put there by One who is foreign to the soul, and belong to Him. Barclay's exposition of the inner Light is clearly founded on this philosophy, and I suspect that it was the same philosophy which caused the frequent use of "seed" and similar terms when speaking of the inner Light. Every well-informed man now knows that the Cartesian psychology was mistaken and false. If accordingly we continue to teach the great truth of God's visitation of every soul in the language of Barclay, we shall "make their truth our falsehood," to borrow another phrase from Lowell.

Another point, in which we now see that the thought of the early Friends was from the modern standpoint wrong, was their conception of the contrast between the human and the Divine, and the chasm which, in their view, yawned between the two. It is not strange that they thought as they did about this, for their view was the commonly accepted belief from the earliest days of Christendom onward, and was peculiarly emphasized in the Cartesian philosophy. Christians had long thought that a definite line determined where the human

leaves off and the Divine begins, that the boundary between the natural and the supernatural is a well-defined and knowable limit. The Fathers of the Council of Chalcedon, for example, believed it. The Friends not only believed this, but they shared with the Calvinists of their time a distrust of all things human. Somehow Adam's sin, or everybody's sin, had made human nature worthless. God would visit it; indeed, He had put these Divine cartridge-like ideas into every man; but the human by itself was to be distrusted. It was this view which led to the disuse of the reason in worship. Instead of regarding the human mind as, when consecrated and sanctified, the fittest of all instruments known to earth for the expression of the Divine, they regarded it as an absolute hindrance to such expression. Whittier has voiced their fundamental position on this point in a line of his otherwise beautiful poem, "The Meeting":—

"God should be most where man is least."

This incongruity between the human and the Divine is to present-day thought an exploded idea. The ancestry of this idea really goes back through Calvin, Augustine, and Mani to the non-Christian Zoroaster and his earlier heathen ancestors. The

best thought now holds that we are akin to God. To take an illustration from the dog—and good men may learn some of their best lessons from the dog—I recognize in my dogs a reasoning power akin to that in me. The two differ in degree rather than in kind, and yet the intellect of man so far surpasses that of the dog in degree that it amounts to a difference in kind. Somehow thus are the human and the Divine conceived today. They are seen to be akin, to be related. They are not identical, but they overlap; there is no chasm between them. The natural is a part of the Divine. The emphasis which the early Friends put upon this non-existent contrast makes their message seem to a modern man distorted.

Another conception shared by the early Friends with all former folk, from the primitive savage to the modern revivalist, as Davenport has shown in his book, *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*, was the idea that abnormal states bordering upon the trance, when the mind is inactive and the feelings predominant, or when words are uttered without the action of the mind, is an especial manifestation of the power of the Spirit. We now know that this is not so; we know that such states are induced by a

nervous excitement, which inhibits the action of the highest powers of the individual. It accordingly seems to the intelligent modern mind that far too much emphasis was laid by Friends on feelings and phenomena that bordered upon this unhealthy excitement. But if they counted this nervous excitement a Divine manifestation, again they erred with all the world, and are not to be blamed. All the mystics had held the same view. It was this belief which kept mysticism alive, although now mysticism has to be disinfected from its microbe.

Another vital weakness in the presentation of early Quakerism—a weakness which grew directly out of the two mistaken conceptions last considered—was the undervaluation of the function of the mind in religion. This undervaluation had become so prominent in the second generation that it began a kind of dry rot in the whole organization. The mind was regarded as man's most undivine possession, excepting, perhaps, his animal passions. There was no hint that it could be made the instrument of the Spirit; that was the function of the feelings. George Fox apparently did not share fully this point of view, for he had "openings," which imply some grasp of intellect; but "openings" soon gave way

to "feelings" or "draughts," as one Journal quaintly calls them, and the way was thus opened for religion to become, at least in the outward expression of it, inane and mawkish.

One other mistake of the early Quaker movement—a mistake that has in some quarters borne curious fruit—was that they took the impressions of their own individual minds as the guarantee of ultimate truth. This is really the position taken by Isaac Pennington in the passage cited above. One's individual impression, on the contrary, must be corrected by comparison with the whole Christian consciousness, or as much of it as is within one's reach, before it affords firm standing ground. If it be in accord with the best that that consciousness reveals, then it may be taken as assured authority for the time being. It is thus that the Scriptures gain their rightful authority. Their best is the best that the religious consciousness of man knows, and accordingly that best has normative value.

Do not misunderstand me. I am passing on the early Friends no criticism, except such as I hope a future generation will pass upon us. My criticism is in reality praise, for it is testimony that they spoke their message in the terms of the thought of their

age. That it was which, next to the Divine character of the message itself, gave them their power. The thought of that age was imperfect and temporary, just as the thought of our age is. If we succeed in interpreting the great Quaker message—the vital message of religion—to the twentieth century, the men of the twenty-second century—with a better knowledge of the universe than even our evolutionary doctrine and our pragmatism afford—will, I hope, be able to point out our errors, just as I have today pointed out some of those of the early Friends. Will they find as much of consecration, of insight, of moral heroism, of the power of God in us to admire as we find in the early Friends? If they do, we shall have soon to experience a great awakening!

The fact is, we admire the early Friends for their revival of the early Christian message of Paul and John—the great truth that man may be united to God in one community of life, so that what the man does, in a real sense God does. The message is permanent; its form changes. Paul gave it one form for the middle of the first century; the great author of the Johannine writings, another for the end of that century; Clement of Alexandria, another



for the end of the second century; St. Francis of Assisi, another for the thirteenth; the German mystics, another for the fourteenth; George Fox, another for the seventeenth century; and John Wesley, another for the eighteenth. Can it be given a form for the twentieth century? That is the problem to which we must next address ourselves.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE FOR THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

It is far easier to be a fairly successful historian than an indifferent prophet; yet he who would outline the Christian Message as it must be put so as to satisfy the longings and kindle the ideals of the people of the present and the immediate future must be a prophet indeed. I make no pretence to that high office, and at the most can give but a few hints of what the message should be.

Some one is, perhaps, ready to ask, Why does the present need any different message from that proclaimed in the past? It does not need a different message, but rather the old message grounded on a foundation the validity of which men of the present will recognize, and freed from implications which are now seen to be mistaken and false.

Since John Fiske some years since called attention to the fact,<sup>1</sup> it has become a commonplace to

<sup>1</sup> See his *Idea of God*, pp. 46-61.

assert that, within the last seventy or one hundred years, the knowledge of man has increased more than during all other periods of his history combined. It is unnecessary now to remind us that practically all our sciences have been born in this period, and that scientific methods have been applied to all departments of knowledge. The change in the material side of life represented by railway, steamship, telegraph, telephone, and phonograph, has been accompanied by an equally radical change and equally significant progress in all departments of knowledge. These changes have created what is practically a new intellectual world for man. There is only time here to note two or three characteristics of the thought of this new intellectual world which bear especially upon the topic in hand.

In the first place, there is a strong sweep in the thought of the present day toward a monistic philosophy of the universe. The distinction between God and nature, even the distinction between God and matter, is difficult to maintain. What we used to count as solid atoms are now seen to be rapidly revolving rings of gas or ether, and some substances, as radium, tend to an activity which entirely dissipates them. It now seems probable that matter it-

self is but a form of the divine activity. If this be true, the old Persian dualism becomes for ever impossible. We can never think again of matter as corrupt; nor can we imagine that it is the work of an evil deity.

Although the philosophy of our time is sweeping strongly and inevitably towards monism, it is not easy on its basis to solve all the problems of life. The difficulties are, however, infinitely less than the difficulties of dualism. In dualism, even as baptised by St. Augustine with a Christian baptism, monotheism is in reality sacrificed, and life for all but a select few becomes a counsel of despair. The difficulties of monism are at the opposite extreme. The dangers are that men will think that the visible universe exhausts all God's activities; that they will in their recognition of the important truth that God is immanent in His world deny the fact of His transcendence; that in recognizing a revelation of Him in nature and in man they will lose faith in His personality; that as they realize that neither nature nor man accomplishes the least thing apart from God, they will lose their sense of the reality and heinousness of sin.

All these are dangers—dangers which are very

real and which must be met. We may confess that they have not yet been met adequately, even to the satisfaction of any number of the modern thinkers themselves, but that does not mean that they are insuperable. Nothing is to be gained by scolding at the trend of the philosophy of our age; it cannot help sweeping toward the monistic standpoint any more than one can help believing that two and two make four. We must go whither the evidence takes us.<sup>1</sup>

I am not a philosopher, and if I were, this is not the place to discuss these abstruse questions. I may only say in passing that I have faith that the thought of our time will be saved from thinking that nature exhausts God's expression of Himself; that it will be saved from denying His personality; and that it will hold to His transcendence as well as to His immanence as it learns more and more of Him through the study of His highest handiwork—human personality. I also myself believe that in the fact of the freedom of the will, the necessity of this freedom to character, and in the fact that real freedom involves the power to do wrong as well

<sup>1</sup> The statement is true of the trend of the thought of the time, in spite of Professor William James's plea for "pluralism." See the *Hibbert Journal*, vol. vi. July, 1908, pp. 721-728.

as right, together with the fact that the animal inheritance of appetite entices towards the selfish choice, will be found a satisfactory explanation of the origin of sin quite in harmony with a monistic philosophy, when some philosopher gains the insight necessary to write a complete intellectual justification of it.

Whether, however, this age-long philosophical puzzle is or is not approaching a satisfactory solution in our time, two things are clear:—The conscience of our age is keener than that of preceding ages in recognizing the heinousness of sins in the concrete; and the thought of the age has for ever made it impossible to think of God as separated from nature, in the sense in which the builder of a dynamo is separated from the dynamo, or to think of Him as ever far removed from the world or from men.

This fact has created a conception of the universe the antithesis of that in which Christianity was born. In the first century of our era, not only was science yet unknown, but there existed in Palestine no adequate conception of nature as such. What we call the "laws of nature" were not conceived. Men lived in an *Arabian Nights* world. Anything

could be done, they believed, if one could only obtain control of a spirit powerful enough to control the spirit which was acting. Good deeds proceeded from a seemingly good spirit (it might not really be so); evil deeds from a seemingly evil spirit. Insanity was not known to result from disordered nerves or a disordered brain, but was thought to result from demoniacal possession. To cure it a good spirit sufficiently powerful to cast out the demon must be present. No wonder that in such an age stories of marvels abounded! Christianity, and indeed all other religions, were born in this intellectual atmosphere.

Later centuries reduced these conceptions to something like order. After a more adequate conception of nature had been obtained, Thomas Aquinas, in the thirteenth century, put forth his famous theory of a kingdom of nature and a kingdom of grace. The former was controlled by laws which we can observe; the latter was made known by incomprehensible miracles. The modern religious world is the heir of this conception, and has been taught that miracles are the necessary attestation of Christianity, until many regard adherence to the world-view, in which accounts of miracles

naturally had their birth, as a part of faith in the Gospel.

Meantime a new world-conception has come to stay in scientific circles. Not only does God work in nature by law, but wherever we find Him working, even in the realm of the soul, it is by law also. What a few years ago would have been regarded as most wonderful miracles—such as taking photographs through opaque substances—are now matters of commonplace science. We do not regard a new experience as a miracle, but as something capable of being understood, and as we seek to understand it, it reveals in part at least its laws. This leads men to believe that what is beyond, and is at present incomprehensible, is controlled by law also—that law is God's way of acting and revealing Himself. As a result it is a part of the world-conception of our time that He is actually revealed in nature. More and more men are coming to believe that there is no distinction or chasm between the natural and supernatural—that one is a part of the other. Such distinction as there is, is believed to be analogous to that between the material and the spiritual. Both material and spiritual are seen, however, to be forms of divine activity and to reveal



the nearness of God, though the spiritual is a higher form of activity than the material.

This recognition of the nearness of God has swept away for ever from people who coördinate their knowledge some ideas which have played an important part—sometimes beneficent and sometimes horrible—in the history of Christianity. The idea of an infallible Church, like that of an infallible Bible,<sup>1</sup> has for such people gone for ever. It is unthinkable, to one who lives in the thought of the present, that God was ever far enough from men

<sup>1</sup> It hurts some good souls to have the Bible thus spoken of. If by the term "infallible" it was meant that the Bible "infallibly leads to God," as a prominent preacher has recently put it, there might be less reason to object to the phrase, though observation teaches that even this is not true for all cases. "Infallible" has, however, been taken, even by the Church itself, to mean that the Bible contains no errors in any of its statements concerning science or history, and that the ethics of the Old Testament are still patterns for us. Modern study has shown not only that this is untrue, but that often different Biblical writers give mutually exclusive representations, which cannot both be true (as for example in 2 Samuel xxiv. and 1 Chronicles xxi.). All this is harmonized with the Bible's matchless ethical and spiritual teaching by the view that the Bible records a progressive revelation, and that each writer expressed his sublime message through the medium of his own intellectual outlook. The times demand that, at the risk of grieving some devout souls whose salvation is secure, Christians should, for the sake of intelligent, perplexed doubters, show their devotion to and faith in the God of truth by leading the van in proclaiming the plain, unequivocal facts about this matter.

to make either an institution or a book His vicar. If He was ever present in His world, He is present now. If men ever had access to Him, they may have access to Him now. It is also unthinkable, to one who grasps the significance of the knowledge of the present, that ever in this world either a man or a book should be infallible.<sup>2</sup>

This being the case, Christian workers are asking, sometimes with hopeful interest, sometimes in blank despair, Have we then any secure basis? Is there no authority to which we can point inquiring souls? Has the Bible no value? Is appeal never to be made to the authority of the Church? These are important practical questions. A right answer to them is vital to every one who would in this generation undertake the cure of souls. The answer

<sup>2</sup> It has been frequently pointed out (see, for example, Edward Grubb's *Authority and the Light Within*, p. 30) that the assumption that our Bible is an infallible guide involves not only the infallibility of God, but four separate human infallibilities, all impossible:—(1) That God's truth was infallibly apprehended by the Biblical writers; (2) that they infallibly expressed it in human language; (3) that what they wrote has been infallibly transmitted to us; and (4) that we can infallibly interpret their expressions. Infallibility in all things implies omniscience, and the Gospels, as the holders of the *kenosis* doctrine all recognize, tell us that even Jesus shared our human ignorance on some points (see Luke ii. 52, and Matthew xxiv. 36; also *cf.* above, chapter I. the third note).

attempted here has grown out of personal experience as a working Christian. My answer may not be a final one, but it is one which in theory looks, I believe, in the right direction, and which in practice has, in cases which could be named, proved its value as a curative in the clinic where souls seek healing through the aid of their fellows.

A soul distressed by the loss of childhood's faith comes and asks, How do you know that the unfolding of God in nature does not exhaust Him? How do you know that He has personality? How do you know that it is possible for men to hold communion with Him?

The answer is: knowledge of this is based on the fact that men practically everywhere have had faith that they can have, and have had, communion with God. In other words, the ground of faith that God is personal and that communion with God is possible is the universal consciousness of mankind. On this consciousness all the religions of the world have been built, and in one way or another most individuals of the race have had conscious communion with or communications from God or a god. Just as the testimony of all men that they see the sun confirms faith in the existence of the sun, so the

testimony of all men that they can hold communion with God affords a similarly secure basis for faith in God's existence and personality. If but one man saw the sun, we should conclude that he was deceived; so if but one man had communion with God, we should justly conclude that his testimony might be the wanderings of a disordered mind. Men have held childish notions, mythological notions about the sun; they have held childish and mythological notions about God; but in neither case does this invalidate their testimony to the main fact. In many cases appeal can be made to the inquirer's own experience. Perhaps he has seen moments when he at least thought that God spoke to him or he had communion with God. In the light of the universal testimony of mankind, his own experience may rekindle his faith.

Every life, then, becomes a little laboratory where God may be discovered and where His existence may be proved. How are scientific discoveries made in a modern laboratory? A scientist puts materials together in some new combination and experiments with them; he observes the effect of his new combination and announces the result; immediately, in other laboratories in all parts of the

world, the experiment is tried over again. If no one else can obtain similar results, the supposed discovery is discarded as a mistake. If a large number of observers do obtain the same results, a new fact is added to science. If there are a few exceptions among those who try these experiments, *i.e.* if a few fail to obtain the desired results, but nearly all investigators do obtain them, the few failures do not invalidate the discovery. The failures are to be explained by some imperfection of material or method; by the temperature of the laboratory or the qualifications of the experimenter. Not otherwise is it in the laboratory of the soul. New knowledge of God is not obtained as the result of one observation, unless other seekers find the experiment verified in the laboratories of their own experience. On the other hand, a few failures do not invalidate the general result. They are accounted for by some spiritual colour-blindness on the part of the observers who give a negative report.

The knowledge of God, then, rests on a basis similar to that of any other kind of knowledge possessed by men; it rests upon first-hand observation and experience; it is the result of millions of observations and experiments in all parts of the

world extending through many centuries. If whole nations of men have theorized for long periods on these experiences and observations in ways that are now seen to be mistaken, religious knowledge in this respect but shares the fate of scientific knowledge, for again and again has this occurred in the realm of science.

The basis of our religious knowledge is, then, the religious consciousness of man—man's first-hand knowledge of God—knowledge based on millions of observations and corrected by frequent conferences among the observers, and constantly renewed experiment. The inquirer may test it in his own laboratory, if he will. Having laid this broad foundation, we may go a step further. Our scientific knowledge rests upon simple observations, many of which any person can test, but, nevertheless, we are not all scientists. In every home there are one or two persons who know enough to do the cooking and feed the family. In most civilized neighborhoods there are one or more apothecaries, who know just enough of science to mix medicines for the cure of diseases. In such communities there are also a few men who know enough of science to tell the apothecaries how to mix the medicine for each specific

disease. There are very few who know enough to make discoveries in science. These few push on into paths before untrodden; they grasp new truth, and, teaching it to other men, lead the doctors, the apothecaries, and even the cooks, out into new paths. Even the common man knows enough of the fundamental facts and axioms on which science rests to give him confidence in the results of those who explore in regions into which he cannot follow. The investigator thus becomes the teacher of all; others test the fringe of a new discovery, doing over what the investigator tells them to do, and lo! they obtain, at least in part, the same results.

It is not otherwise in religion. Some few of us have just about a cook's knowledge of religious things; we can get nourishment; though most of us here have to depend largely upon other people's cooking. There are fewer still who have knowledge enough to heal those who are sick in soul, but still we have our spiritual physicians, and on the whole they are very successful. Far fewer are those who, working out from the common religious knowledge, have penetrated into the hitherto unknown and have made religious discovery. Thank God! there have been such as these. They have



been the prophets and religious teachers of the race. They have not been infallible, but they have been rightly the religious authorities of mankind. The common people have known enough of the implications on which their new experiences rested to follow their teachings and prove their value. Such discoverers were Confucius, and Buddha, and Mohammed, and Socrates; here we place the Great Prophets—Moses, Elijah, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the rest. Here, too, we put Paul and the author of the Johannine writings, St. Augustine, St. Francis, Luther, Zwingli, George Fox, and others. These gain their authority on the same ground that the man of science gains his authority. It is just as right and just as valid. Their authority differs with the clearness of the vision of each and the permanence of the value of that which he has added to religious knowledge. We yield them obedience, not because they possessed a faculty of revelation which has been lost, but because in experience we can test the validity of their religious discoveries and find them true. The forces which gave them their greater religious knowledge are still at work, but long testing of their results, as compared with the results of lesser geniuses in the religious sphere,



has proved the value of the vision of the greatest seers and given them an authority, so that, as in science we have sat at the feet of Copernicus and Kepler, of Galileo and Newton, of Lyell and Darwin, of Champollion and Rawlinson, in religion we sit at the feet of Isaiah and Jeremiah, of Paul and John, or whatever the author of the Fourth Gospel may have been called.

It thus comes about that we are led to a recognition of the supreme religious authority of Jesus Christ, for, among all the religious seers of the race, He stands supreme. His teachings, tested in the laboratory of experience, are found to be the truest yet given to the world. He saw more deeply than any other into the heart of God, and life, and duty. Compared with Him, Buddha and Socrates, the best of the non-Jewish pre-Christian seers, groped in the twilight. Although it is clear that the roots of His nature struck deep into the divine nature far beyond those of others, He lived a human life, He shared our sufferings, He spoke our human language. The consensus of the world's best religious judgment accords Him a supreme place, because He speaks to the deep needs of humanity as no other has spoken. His voice wakens

echoes within the soul that are awakened by no other voice; He touches chords which vibrate to no other touch. His word as to God's Fatherhood is the most satisfying thought yet uttered; His teachings as to human duties are seen to be incomparably above all others. Even a present-day Socialist, as he denounces the Church as the club of a privileged class, reverences Jesus Christ, declaring that Christianity has never been really tried.

In the light which comes from Jesus Christ we look back again over the seers of the race, and we conclude that those who came of His people and prepared the way for Him, and those who followed as His successors, when judged with severe fairness, grasped a message of more living and permanent significance than those who were of other religious pedigrees. It is not merely that we are more familiar with them that the words of Hosea, Isaiah, Paul, and John search us with a power which those of Confucius, Buddha, Socrates, and Mohammed do not. The enlightened soul finds in the Biblical seers a different quality. In the end, then, the modern Christian comes back to a point where he acknowledges the authority of

Christ as supreme. He can say with Whittier:—

“O Lord and Master of us all!  
 Whate’er our name or sign,  
 We own Thy sway, we hear Thy call,  
 We test our lives by Thine.”

But some one is, perhaps, asking, If there is no real distinction between the natural and the supernatural, what becomes of the divinity of Christ? If God is in nature and in man, so that nature and man are divine, is Christ Divine in any sense in which these are not? Yes: He is. The emphasis which we are placing on the testimony of consciousness brings to light the proof that He is. He only, of all men of our race, has been conscious of complete moral union with God. That consciousness, combined with His sane life and matchless teaching, is proof that He enjoyed a higher, a more complete, a more unique Sonship than any other has known. His nature sent its roots more deeply into the Divine Personality than any other, so that He is not only Master but in a unique sense the Son of God. No form of faith long retains its power to move men unless it recognizes this. No mere philosophy or ethical culture alone will long prove a satisfying message to large numbers of men in this century any more than in any preceding. The

essential element of power in the Gospel Message of the twentieth century, as of other centuries, is that "God was in Christ." As in other centuries, so now, the Gospel which loses the Divine uniqueness of Christ loses its power. It may be intellectual and æsthetic, but it will prove to be no Gospel. The modern Christian, too, values the Bible and the Church. He has swept away, it is true, some ancient fictions regarding them. The notions of science which ancient saints entertained in their respective generations he casts aside. Their crude morality is for him no longer a pattern; but wherever a noble soul has grasped more of God than his fellows, and added a permanent contribution to man's knowledge of God, or wherever a group of saints have lived the truth in effective reality, the man of today is ready to sit at their feet in things spiritual, that he may learn the secret of their power. We therefore accord to Church, to Bible, and to Christ the real and right authority which each has ever possessed (although we do not permit that authority to nullify the divine Voice which still speaks in the souls of Christians), because we find in Church, in the Bible, and in Christ notable examples, in varying degrees of clearness, of the fact

that God and man meet in the human spirit. On the whole, we have in the religious teachers thus represented the most notable examples of religious discovery in the history of the race, and Christ is the Master of them all. In other words, we reach our recognition of authority by way of the religious consciousness of man. We thus ground authority upon a secure basis, place its different exponents in proper perspective, and put it in a form to commend it to the twentieth century.

Having led our inquirer to recognize that the claims of Christ as supreme Teacher and Son of God rest on a basis as solid as that of any great contemporary scientific leader, we must next try to make clear to him Christ's message concerning God and man.

The supreme message of Christ about God is that God is Love—God is a Father—God is Christ-like. The human heart in the midst of a universe of cosmic forces longs for love. Many a modern cultured man as he looks at the tremendous sweep of nature and her forces inwardly cries out, as he realizes the yearnings of his heart and his own insignificance,

“What does the cosmic vastness care!”

Christ's message is that God cares. The one heart among all the men of our race that knew God best declares that God is not a cosmic vastness, but a tender personality; that He is not an unfeeling force, but a Christ-like friend; that He does not hold Himself immeasurably above us as the Absolute and Unknowable, but that in spite of all our blindness and sin He is forgiving; that He invites us to His fellowship; that He needs our lives for the completion of His purposes, as much as we need Him for the winning of our own personalities.

The message of Christ invites man into personal social relations with God. John Caird<sup>1</sup> and George A. Gordon<sup>2</sup> have taught us that the doctrine of the Trinity—a doctrine which seems to many modern men unreal and remote—has always stood for the social nature of God. The heart of all social qualities is love. Because God is eternally social He is eternally loving. This love is so all-embracing that it is satisfied only as it finds such a response in the hearts of His children that each one is united with Him in a life of affection and moral purpose. As Sabatier has said, "Man is incurably religious,"

<sup>1</sup> *Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*, Glasgow, 1899, Lecture III.

<sup>2</sup> *Ultimate Conception of the Faith*, Boston, 1903, pp. 370 ff.

and to such a message, if properly presented, men will respond. In the midst of our social travail and longing and aspirations the reality which lies behind the formal doctrine of the Trinity—the fact that God represents in Himself society; that He is, accordingly, eternally intelligent and loving; that the eternal forces of the universe are fighting on the side of love and goodness and the highest social qualities and longings—comes as a balm and an inspiration. This element is to play an increasingly large part in the Christian Message of the twentieth century.

God is eternally social. He invites men to His fellowship. He would make each man a member of His family. Yes, more than this, He would make each life a temple of His—He would fill it with Himself. God has made every man hungry for God; in the historic Christ He has supplied objectively the knowledge about Himself that was necessary in order that man might find God and have his hunger satisfied. To profit by the knowledge one must put it into practice. "He that willeth to do His will shall know of the teaching." Here men are anew invited to apply the scientific method of which our generation is so fond, and to try in the

laboratory of experience the validity of the instruction of the supreme Teacher.

Or, to put the Christian Message in a slightly different way, all men are God's children, but they have most of them never really enjoyed the privileges of their sonship. Jesus Christ, whose claims to a unique Sonship rest upon the solid foundation which we have sketched, came to help all men to realize the full joys of their sonship. If again we endeavour to state the Christian Message biologically, it would be something like this: God, by the process of physical evolution, completed man's body long ago; He is now engaged in completing the inner life of man. The inner, spiritual life cannot be perfected by blind forces pushing from behind, such as perfected the human body; it must be perfected by a powerful ideal alluring from before. It must be stimulated by social union with the highest personality, God. In Christ, God revealed the alluring ideal; in Christ, He opened the way for this fellowship with Himself by revealing His heart of love. He extended by word the invitation to come into close fellowship with God, He interpreted it through a self-sacrificing life of service, He voiced it by giving Himself to death. God in Him appeals



to the deepest instincts of man, and to the strongest motives latent in human personality. He offers us the satisfaction of our strongest social instincts.

The Christian Message has for centuries been conceived as the payment of an infinite debt, or the bearing of an infinite penalty. This legal conception has made much of sin as an offence against a Sovereign of infinite majesty. On the biological view, which is today prevailing more and more, sin is wilful immaturity or wilful disease. The work of Christ is accordingly more and more seen to be God's means of awakening the soul to its needs, and of bringing it into fellowship with Himself. It is at once the cure for man's deadly sickness, and the means of bringing him to maturity.

In this work of awakening men, the life, the teaching, and the character of Christ must in the twentieth century take a more prominent place in the proclamation of the Gospel than ever before, but His suffering for men will, as in the past, continue to be the most appealing part of his work. He gave Himself unselfishly to the horrible death of the cross, to reveal to the uttermost His love and God's love. This fact will continue to touch the springs of feeling with unique power, and to move

wills to consecration and endeavour. As men realize that this suffering was not directed toward God to influence Him, but toward man for his awakening, and that it was not a part of an artificial legal scheme, but the natural outgoing of the divinest love for the accomplishment of its holy ends, men will look through the sufferings of Christ into the heart of God as through a window, and be moved to all that is noble by the depths of the unselfish and agonizing love which they behold there.<sup>1</sup>

It is this last thought which, when grasped, is most powerful to persuade. If Christ's suffering reveals the suffering of God, that suffering was not done once for all, but is still in progress. No life is ruined by sin without wringing His heart; no individual refuses to make real the divine ideal for his life without bringing to an end in his person a long line of influences for the regeneration of the world, which should have been passed on with accelerated power. He thus thwarts the divine purpose, retards the coming of the kingdom, and thereby extends the age-long agony of the loving Father. Could any other thought so powerfully

<sup>1</sup> For more extensive treatment of this point, see the writer's *Roots of Christian Teaching as found in the Old Testament*, chapters xiii., xiv.

dissuade from sin? No man suffers in the strife with sin, but God suffers with him. The suffering of Jesus Christ is witness to the fact that God suffers with all the sufferings of His children as they fight for the elimination of the slum, for purity in politics, as they carry the Gospel to the heathen, or in any field by loving service take up the redemptive work of the Son of Man. Could any other thought so nerve the worker to noble and Christ-like endeavour? Love involves suffering. Love is the highest fruit of the social life. The atoning suffering is the inevitable corollary of the eternally social nature of God.

Interpreted in this way, the Gospel gains in power and in clearness. It meets men's needs as they are understood in the light of the evolutionary science of today, and it meets the situation much more vitally than it was formerly thought to do. Interpreted as the payment of a debt, or as the bearing of a judicial penalty, or as a governmental measure to prevent further rebellion, the work of Christ appears artificial and unreal; interpreted as God working on sound psychological and biological principles for the completion of the creation of man, it is unrivalled in vital power and in moral beauty.

But the significance of this message, as we must present it to the men of today, lies in the fact that it introduces them to a first-hand experience of God. Of this we must not lose sight. Christianity lived on faith in the experience of others has proved itself a poor thing. Men desire reality now, and God means that they shall have it. It was this first-hand experience which made the Apostolic age so powerful. It is our duty now to go to every man and say: Christ does not ask you to submit to authority; He invites you to come and know God for yourselves; if you will, you may share in the experiences which made the world's heroes happy, heroic, and triumphant.

But here we shall be met by a difficulty. God is most often known in the soul through mystic experiences—through experiences which, however intellectual they may be, are characterized by a stirring of the emotions—an exalted, sublime feeling which warms the soul and makes it conscious of the stirrings of a higher life within us. I have two friends who say that they have never experienced this mystic emotion. They are both Christian men, but they declare that for them such feeling is impossible. I have heard one of them declare, with

tears in his eyes, that he would give anything to enjoy the satisfaction of such emotion, and I have heard the other one say that if such feelings are necessary to a Christian, he can never be one, for they are, on account of his peculiar temperament, impossible to him. He would substitute for such mystic experiences a satisfaction of mind, and the strengthening of the ethical elements of the will, as the channels through which one may know God.

In the past we have been too narrow in this respect. We have based first-hand knowledge of God too exclusively on the feelings. It is the "upright who shall see God," and noble living is one important channel of knowledge of Him. But to most of those who live nobly sooner or later some witness of emotion comes. Most people behold the light with eyes, but those whose eyes are sightless learn through the warmth of the sun that the great source of light exists. We may be grateful that it is possible for men to know God through the mental satisfaction that comes to them as they endeavour to do right—that they know Him through the moral satisfaction which the ethical will gives, but we may be more grateful that God does not relegate us all to such cold satisfaction. To the great majority God

will continue to make Himself known by touching the springs of feeling, although feeling is refined and exalted by training of the mind. Through this sublimated feeling God will continue in most men to reach the will. But the one thing on which we insist is that every man, each in his own way, may know God, may have personal access to Him, and personal experience of Him, whether in some the intellectual element, or in others the emotional, be the stronger. This is an indispensable element of the Christian Message of today.

But in large part the Christian Message should be addressed to Christians. Christians do not begin to realize the obligations which this Apostolic, modern Christian Message imposes upon them. If we are temples of God, "what manner of persons ought we to be in all manner of holy conversation and godliness?" I do not mean that we should withdraw from the world, or talk "cant," or wear a peculiar dress, but God should so shine in our characters and deeds that life would have a new smell, to borrow George Fox's phrase, to all whom we could influence. Our lives, because of their high ethical quality and spirit, should be a meeting-place where other men may find God.

Such was the case in the early centuries. The author of the Epistle to Diognetus, and Aristides in his *Apology*, tell of the life of the early Christians. They wore the same dress as the people about them, they spoke the language of other people, but they were pervaded by a different spirit, and a different type of unselfish ethics prevailed among them. Professor Dobschütz, in his book on the life of the early Christians,<sup>1</sup> has, as noted in a former chapter, shown by indisputable proof that in the early Church the consciousness that men came into direct contact with God, and lived in fellowship with Him, created a new type of individual and of society. The same thing happened again in the time of St. Francis of Assisi, and made the Franciscan movement the sensation of the thirteenth century. How this same belief in direct communion with God led George Fox and his followers to a new and higher standard of Christian living—a standard which has made the name Quaker a synonym of trustworthiness—is well known. If the heart of the twentieth-century Christian Message is the Gospel of personal union with God, it must be proclaimed through lives which evince the fruits of such divine indwelling. These

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Life in the Primitive Church.*



fruits must be exhibited in even greater quantity, and, if possible, in finer quality, than ever before, for now it is on such fruits alone, and not on supernatural sanctions, that the Gospel must depend for its credentials. For good or for ill the supernatural, as formerly understood, has lost hold on our age. Many who do not deny miracles find them most difficult of belief. Christianity may help men to belief in a new supernatural, called, perhaps, by some more appropriate name, but the old supernatural will never again help men who live in the present intellectual movement to believe in Christianity.

This call to high Christian living and new Christian ethics applies with supreme force to the individual, demanding in each one purity, unselfishness, joy, and self-sacrificing service; but it applies as never before to Christian society as a whole. There are problems of social and industrial organization which Christianity has never solved. These are confronting the twentieth century. Unless Christianity, as it is embodied in us and men and women like us, has a practical message concerning these things, it will seem to an increasing number of the people an idle tale. The world is demanding, not



only personal righteousness but social righteousness. Men are not asking for charity but for industrial and social justice. They are demanding an organization of our outward life that shall give every man a chance, and that shall fairly distribute the products of the complex labour of modern society. What they are really demanding, though they do not know it, is that the spirit of Jesus Christ shall be embodied, not only in our characters but in our institutions; that it shall rule in the Church, where at most its manifestations have hitherto been sporadic only; that it shall rule in our politics, which are as yet practically untouched by it; that it shall prevail in our corporations and in our trade unions, and teach "every man to look not only on his own things, but also on the things of others," not as men now fulfil this injunction of St. Paul, with eyes of covetousness, but with the eyes of brotherly consideration. This can never be till Christian life reaches a higher level than it has ever yet reached, unless it was in Christianity's earliest dawn. How far beyond our present poor conceptions of Christian living must we not go, in order to make our city governments pure, to wipe out the slum, to make the submerged tenth respectable members of society,

to cure the social evil, to make our corporations deal with their employees as with Christian brothers, and our organized labour deal with employers as Christ would deal with them, to abolish war and substitute arbitral justice, to carry education, civilization, and Christ to the dark parts of Asia and Africa, until the United States of the World shall not only be an accomplished fact, but shall be a veritable Kingdom of Christ! These are some of the tasks awaiting the Church of Christ. Men think to accomplish these things by social panaceas, or by changing the methods of distribution; but no method of distribution or of social organization, useful as these may be, will produce the desired result. Human nature must be changed; the animal spirit eradicated; the Christ spirit substituted. God only can do this; the message of Christ inviting man to a life with God is the means by which He would accomplish it.

The message for the present is, then, the great privilege of personal union with God—first-hand experience of Him—an experience which is the one pathway to the highest personal development and salvation, but which also involves, on the one hand, the necessity of sharing the self-sacrificing life of God as that life is revealed in Christ, in a sense in

which His Church has not yet shared it, and, on the other, the unspeakable privilege of becoming a fellow-worker with God in completing the evolution of humanity by wiping out the slum, redeeming society, Christianizing the world, and making it one family.

On this side the work should appeal to every gallant young soul. We are as yet but just in the morning of time. The beginnings of civilization in its earliest centres occurred only some seven thousand years ago. The late Professor Shaler, of Harvard, in his last book<sup>1</sup> declared that, so far as any scientist can see, the earth may still go on with man living upon it for one hundred millions of years into the future. We cannot imagine such a stretch of time! It is like an eternity to us! However this opinion may be corrected in the future, it is more nearly true than the old Apocalyptic visions of the end of the world. To the old motive of saving souls for eternity there is now added the motive of building a perfect society upon the earth for what, to our human imaginations, is almost an eternity. With God in us, and such duties and privileges about us, "what manner of persons ought we to be

<sup>1</sup> *Man and the Earth*, 1905, cf. pp. 161, 217, 224, and 226.

in all holy living and godliness!" Gallant service full of danger, with possible glory at the end, has always appealed to the young. I feel confident that if the opportunities and difficulties of the present situation, together with a real vision of God as He is revealed in Christ, could be grasped by the young men and women of our time, there would be such a Christian revival, such a wave of consecration, as we have not yet seen.

A young poet, in a poem published in the *Independent*, July 2, 1908, has happily expressed, in speaking of another theme, what I would say of this—

"Meseems it renders God great joy to see  
Hands striving after His creatively,  
Yea, that He even left a part undone  
That we might finish that by Him begun  
And help Him with our efforts to erect  
His house, as masons help an architect.

If this be true, that He of us hath need,  
Oh, then are we the sons of God, indeed!"

Do you ask me whether all the world is ready for the Christian Message as I have tried to set it forth today? I answer, God did not cease to make fishes when He began to make quadrupeds, nor did He cease to make quadrupeds when He began to make men. Each new form of life has added to the

complexity of the life of the world. Similarly, there are people still living in the thought of the thirteenth century. These regard Protestantism as infidelity. To such the Church of Rome still has a mission. Others have not passed beyond the thought of the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. These regard the new theology as infidelity. To these a legal or governmental interpretation of the Atonement still has value. It would be a great misfortune if either the teachings of the Church of Rome or of the older Protestant theologians should cease at once. But some of us have learned through bitter struggle that to insist on the eternal validity of some teachings of the past makes a Christian life impossible for the twentieth-century man. We have learned, too, through surprisingly joyous experience, that a religious life, nurtured by Christ as He is interpreted through the new forms of thought, is as much richer than the religious life nurtured on the teachings of John Calvin, as the religious life of the Puritan was deeper, richer, and more real than that of the Romanist. To the great mass of intelligent readers in our modern world, such as are every year entering active life from our colleges, the line of appeal must be something like that

which I have here endeavored to outline—a knowledge of God scientifically grounded on a broad basis of universal experience, but finding its supreme revelation in Christ, a first-hand personal experience of God, and a heroic life which shall reveal God to other people, with the added privilege of becoming helpers of God at this creative epoch of the world's history in completing the creation of the world and of man. This privilege can only be fully entered upon by those who so love God, and who so share in His love for men, that they are ready to participate also in God's sufferings.

The world does not need a new Gospel, but the old Gospel told and lived in such a way that it will be possible for men to believe it true—so lived and told that the Gospel will be seen to be the one indispensable help to the completion of life. It needs the Gospel so presented through holy lives, and so worked into the warp and woof of daily existence that it will be seen to have a social and economic value beyond all earthly things for the life that now is, as well as to be the beginning of the life which is to come.

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